

THE ART OF  
GERALD MOIRA.



HAROLD  
WATKINS





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Plate 1.  
PASTORAL.  
1921.



# THE ART OF GERALD MOIRA

*By HAROLD WATKINS*

*With*

SOME NOTES AND THOUGHTS  
ON DECORATIVE ART

*By GERALD MOIRA*

*Professor of Decorative and Mural Painting at the Royal College of Art,  
South Kensington, 1900-1922*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

is due and is gratefully tendered to Professor Gerald E. Moira, for his kindness in permitting me to prepare this all-too-inadequate summary of his life and labours, who has given me the opportunity to see again pictures which were in his possession, has allowed me to examine drawings and cartoons, and who finally consented, somewhat in face of his inclination (since he argues that his work in life is that of a painter rather than that of a writer), to add to these pages his "Notes and Thoughts on Decorative Art"; to the Editor of *Colour Magazine* for the loan of certain blocks and for the help which he has so willingly given; to Mr. P. G. Konody, for the loan of certain photographs; to the Librarian of the Passmore Edwards Free Library for permission to examine the Shakespeare Frieze; and to Mr. E. W. Savory for assistance in connection with the picture of Mistress Dorothy Hazard.

J. HAROLD WATKINS.

*West Kensington, October, 1922.*



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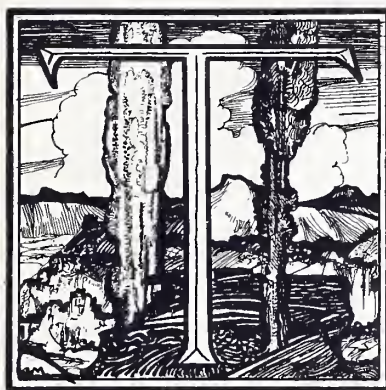
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PART I.  
THE ART OF GERALD MOIRA.  
*By Harold Watkins.*





HERE is no effect without a cause—indeed, without many causes. To try to ascribe the separate and definite causes, however, to the effects which are, in their ensemble, Gerald Moira's genius, is likely to be a difficult task, though perhaps one may find it easy to essay some broad deductions.

The work that has come from the brush of Moira declaims to the observer two primary qualities. First, there is the delightful and competent ease and grace of composition apparent in every painting, from the studio study to the great ceiling decorations that cover magnificent areas in splendid buildings ; and secondly, the glorious, rich, and often daring, but always successful colour-schemes in which his conceptions are carried out. Gerald Moira is as able a decorative painter as he is a painter-decorator, and he glories in modern, unconventional paintings that, on wall or easel, vie in their colourings with the grandeur of nature.

As to causes : the first of these primary qualities—the ability to build up and balance the integral parts of a picture to practical perfection—is largely, perhaps, hereditary ; for Moira the painter is the son of a painter. One imagines him in early youth, even during the most impressionable years of childhood, surrounded by an environment essentially artistic, influenced continually, consciously or subconsciously, by this environment. He grew up in an atmosphere of Art that no doubt generated, in his then plastic mind, a love of the beautiful and an ability to distinguish it by a process of automatic analysis from the non-beautiful. To this he added industry and assiduity in the study of things artistic and appertaining to art. And the full result of all this we see in the faultless composition of the works of his maturer years.

The second of these important primary qualities, a quality that distinguishes Moira from among the ruck of contemporary decorative painters, his masterful colour-sense, may spring originally from the self-same cause, heredity. For in Moira's veins is Spanish blood. Doubtless the inherent love of bright, gay colour has been fostered and cherished and cultivated during his early life and training by himself and his tutors, but at the same time it is impossible, in an honest endeavour to search out fundamentals, to ignore its probable hereditary genesis.

About the year 1837, the same year in which Queen Victoria ascended the throne and ushered in a long period during which the Arts were to flourish exceedingly, a young Portuguese came to London as a member of his country's Diplomatic Service. This man was Edward Moira, who was then about twenty years of age. There is no reason to believe that he was a better or a worse diplomat than his contemporaries and colleagues, or any more or less distinguished than the average member of a diplomatic service doing his country's work abroad ; but, however that may be, there was that in the young man's soul that craved for another form of expression than diplomatic verbiage, and it was not long before he forsook the realms of international diplomacy and entered those of non-national art. He became a painter of miniatures, then very much the vogue, and " The Service " knew him no more.

Parentage.



The young artist settled in London, where in due course he earned a reputation and an eminence as a miniature painter that brought him a sufficiency of what the world calls success. Later he married. His wife's father hailed also from Portugal and was a member of the same service that had brought young Moira to London; her mother was a Spanish lady.

Thus Gerald Edward Moira, who was born on the twenty-sixth of January, 1867, is, one might say, three-quarters Portuguese and one-quarter Spanish, although by virtue of the fact that his father had taken out naturalisation papers many years before the boy's birth, he has as much right to claim the nationality of the country of his birth as any other Englishman, and, strangely enough, notwithstanding the ties of relationship that bind him to the South he has never visited either Portugal or Spain. But there is the blood of the warm South in his veins, and its influence is everywhere visible in his art.

From the time of his courageous departure from the Portuguese Diplomatic Service until the year 1875, the elder Moira practised the art of miniature-painting in London. In that year, however, he moved, with his family, to Chislehurst, in Kent, where his son had opportunities of observing and studying the beauties of the English country landscape at first hand. Already the son showed every inclination to embrace a career which should be connected with art, and during the ten years of his life at Chislehurst received the first groundings in the practice of drawing and painting, his principal tutors being his own father and Nature herself.

In the year 1885 the family returned to London, and Gerald Moira entered upon a serious course of art-training. His immediate ambition was to be admitted to the Royal Academy School and he set about realising it with an admirable determination. Not that there was any doubt of its ultimate achievement: a natural aptitude and skill combined with the elementary training he had received at his father's hands precluded that; but it was necessary that he should qualify according to the rules of the Academy, and he began by going to the British Museum in the daytime to draw from the antique, and, to help to further still more rapidly his proficiency, to an Art School at night. Between times he earned money by doing pen and ink designing and illustrations for publishing houses in Bouverie Street, and particularly for a now defunct periodical called *The Lock to Lock Times*.

Coupled with his inborn ability, such unflagging industry was bound to realise its due reward, and in 1887 Moira entered the School of the Royal Academy of Arts at Burlington House, where he was a fellow-student with several eminent artists who have since passed away, such as Byam Shaw, Frank Craig, and Lawrence Koe, and many others who are living to-day, who are now, like himself, at the top of their respective vocations.

The young student's period of training at the Royal Academy School was a long sequence of minor, but nevertheless brilliant, successes. During his first year, in competition against the students, he gained the Armitage Prize for figure composition. Here was the first tangible outcome of the early influences of environment and elementary training to which, up to this time, he had been subjected.

At the end of the following year he carried off the third prize for life drawing; the following year brought him the second prize; and finally, twelve months later, he succeeded



Plate 2.  
THE KING'S DAUGHTER  
1896.







Plate 3  
THE MEETING OF LANCELOT AND GUINEVERE.  
From the Frieze in the Trocadero Restaurant, London.  
1896.



in obtaining possession of the first prize. Ultimately, in his last term at the School, he fell short of the coveted premier honour, the Royal Academy's Gold Medal, by the casting vote of the President, Sir Frederick Leighton, alone.

Moira's father had died in 1887, the year in which he had entered the R.A. School, and serious family responsibilities had devolved upon the young student. These he was able, by dint of unremitting industry, to carry, and when his scholastic career came to an end and he was free and fit to start out in real earnest to earn a living with his brush, he lost no time in taking the first steps. Jointly with G. Spencer Watson and the late Lawrence Koe he took a studio in Bedford Gardens, Kensington, where he immediately commenced work on three portraits, of Sir John Staines, Sir Walter Parrett and Dr. Roberts respectively, which now adorn the choir practice room of Magdalen College, Oxford. These completed, he painted a portrait of the late Lord Jersey, commissioned for the Ancient Society of Druids, all of these portraits being entrusted to him by Phillip H. Calderon, R.A., the then keeper of the Royal Academy. Moreover, within a few months, his first picture was hung "on the line" at Burlington House.



First Exhibition  
Pictures."The Silent  
Voice."

It is a far step from the mere painting of pictures for show in fleeting exhibitions, or for sale for the furnishing or decoration of the houses of the well-to-do, with no idea of what will finally flank them or surround them, or even for the ornamentation of a single spot in a public picture gallery, to the mural decorations, huge in one sense and great in more than one, which have been, perhaps, the chief instrument of Gerald Moira's fame.

When Moira set up in his part studio as a painter of pictures, it was as a painter of pictures within the ordinary meaning of the word, and the ordinary gilt frame, and there was no thought in his mind at this time of his pending development into an artist who was to jump, almost at a bound, into the highest rank among British decorators.

The successful pictures of his first two years, however—ignoring those which were purely portraits—indicated to whosoever had the eyes to see an ability of interpretation that, combined with his skill of composition, were sure to direct him along decorative lines where these qualities would be most surely valued.

The first picture, an imaginative figure-piece, was founded on the lines :

" Thereto the silent voice replied,  
' Look up, look up—the world is wide ."

and showed a remarkable ability in the painter to take a given conventional subject and interpret it along his own unconventional lines. There is a quality in the picture which was well expressed by a critic, writing at the time of its exhibition at Burlington House : " In the blue moonlight, close about the dazed and doleful figure of a seated girl, a ' silent voice,' or half perceived figure, whispers a coming comfort. Weird, haunting, fascinating it is as a page from *L'Intruse* of Maeterlinck."

The second canvas, too, which was again hung " on the line " the following year, was founded on an extract from a poem, this time Swinburne's

" Golden gifts for all the rest,  
Sorrow of heart for the king's daughter."

In the picture the king's daughter sits in the transparent shadow of the foreground, on a river bank, solitarily nursing her bitter thoughts, while in the background in glorious sunlight there is a vision-like reality of turreted castle and on the opposite bank of the river her more fortunate sisters bask in the sunshine of virtue. About this picture particularly there was a suggestion of Moira's future in its decorative, almost tapestry-like quality almost as much as in its large size and the admirable and expert manner in which both decoration and largeness were controlled. (Plate 2.)

"The King's  
Daughter."

Fortunately for British decorative art, the signs were accurately read. It was at this time that Messrs. J. Lyons & Co. had just acquired the site of the old Argyll Rooms and Trocadero Music Hall in Shaftesbury Avenue, and had erected upon it a splendid new





Plate 4.  
THE BOAR HUNT.  
From the Frieze in the Trocadero Restaurant, London.  
1896.







Plate 5  
THE BLUE CARPET.  
1917.





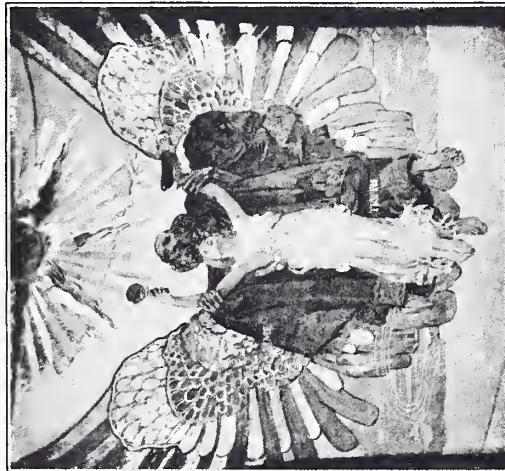
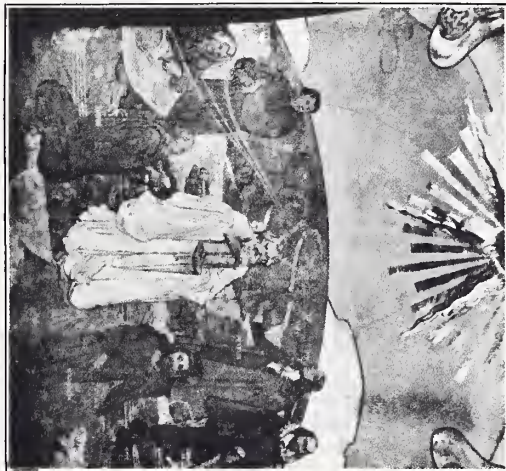
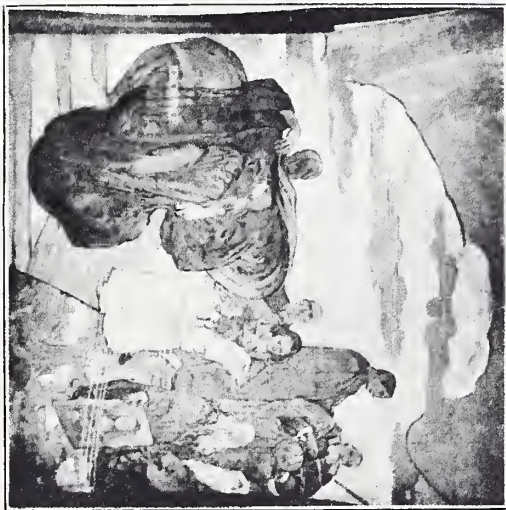


Plate 6.  
CEILING DECORATION.  
In the Library, Unitarian Church, Liverpool.  
1898.





restaurant, the famous "Trocadero." The company had begun to create a new fashion in restaurants, gay, bright, pleasant and beautiful, and the Trocadero was to be their *chef d'oeuvre*, their masterpiece. It is directly due, however, to the keen perception and artistic flair of Mr. C. W. Oakley, then a young manager for the Company, that Moira was invited to design and carry out a frieze in the entrance hall of the new building. This work was duly commissioned from Gerald Moira and F. Lynn Jenkins jointly, Moira's part being to choose the subjects, make the designs and cartoons, and paint the frieze, while Jenkins' consisted of the sculpture work of actual modelling, the selection in both cases being with the hearty approval and co-operation of everyone concerned.

Beginnings of  
Mural Decoration

Early in 1896, the artists set about the task and Moira had started upon his successful and distinguished career as a mural decorator. This phase, when he worked with Lynn Jenkins, the sculptor, in carrying out jointly decorations in coloured plaster, was to last a number of years and include many fine works, but it is doubtful if any later undertaking of this period was carried out with more enthusiasm by either of the partner-artists than this first one, for both Moira and Jenkins were tyros testing their genius.

Moira went to Tennyson for his subject. There, in the "Idylls of the King" he found the material from which to build up his decoration. Where else, indeed, could he have found a subject more suitable from every point of view? In the delightful "Idylls" were romance and feasting, love and kitchen-lore, chivalry and glory—and everything of the good old English kind. What subject could he have chosen more compatible with the avowed ideals and policy of this good new English restaurant, solid, substantial and honest?

That well-known writer, "Tis," who interviewed Gerald Moira on behalf of "*Colour*" a few years ago, asked him a point-blank leading question: "What do you consider to be the first essential in mural decoration?" It is interesting to note the writer's report as he set it down shortly afterwards in print: "The answer came pat, 'Fitness'." And in this statement "Tis" showed that he had elucidated the secret of the artist's success. The quality of "fitness," which to so many is immeasurably elusive, is always present in Moira's work, and his choice of illustration of the *but* of the Trocadero from the classic tales of the ancient Court of King Arthur and his Table Round goes far to show how thoroughly the sense of fitness rules throughout his work. In his later undertakings there is invariably evident the same ability to apply legend or history aptly to the case in hand.

The entrance hall of the Trocadero is peculiar in shape. Not the least difficulty that confronted the two artists was the problem of how to employ the space to the best advantage. Three windows break up the South wall, and here narrow panels had to be employed, and an archway ate into the frieze in the Eastern corner of the North wall, but for the rest there were opportunities for several long, almost panoramic panels, the whole frieze being approximately six feet six inches in depth.

The Trocadero  
Frieze.

The long panels offered an excellent opportunity for the display of what one might call "general" subjects, and Moira took full advantage of this and filled them with big and important scenes. There are four such scenes; the first, "The meeting of Lancelot and Guinevere," (Plate 3) in which are gallant knights and picturesque serving-men, curvetting

horses and sinuous drapery ; the second, "A Boar Hunt," (Plate 4) alive with the thrill of the chase ; third, "A Banquet at the Table Round" ; and lastly, "The Tourney," glittering with all the brilliance of the knightly festival.

Between and to the right and left of the windows on the South side are the five smaller panels. The centre one of these depicts delightfully the beautiful Queen of the Tourney, seated on her outdoor throne, eyes demurely downcast, while about her wave banners and bunting and at her feet is the wreath of the victor, upheld on the point of a glittering lance. Two other narrow panels flank this, and two wider these again, the subjects of the outer two being respectively a kitchen scene in which a pretty kitchen-maid turns a spit while clouds of smoke curl picturesquely above ; and the unfurling of King Arthur's banner in which the folds of the great flag, emblazoned with the emblematic lion, belly majestically in the breeze.

In all these scenes Moira's genius as a decorator has enabled him to construct a vivid and beautiful picture of the time. Deeply sculptured in relief, and coloured in the gay, luxurious tints that he delights to use, with all the full golden value of the glint of shining armour, they breathe the very spirit of the ancient story. The hall is perhaps somewhat too small for their perfect display, but even thus they add beauty and splendour to the richness of the building. Looking at them to-day, one is forced to regret that in the twenty-odd years during which they have been in place they have been allowed to suffer a good deal from the smoke of a big coal fire which burns, the long winters through, in the hall, and to become considerably obscured and blackened by the frequent London fogs and the grime of the London atmosphere that have entered the hall through the constantly open door.



This was the beginning of a definite period in Moira's work. From the Trocadero frieze he went on through a series of commissions, working jointly with Jenkins in coloured plaster. Almost immediately after the completion of this first task, in which they had proved their mettle, the artists were invited to execute a somewhat similar work for the same company in their new restaurant in Throgmorton Street.

Here Moira designed a series of panels based on stories culled from the operas of Wagner. There were, for instance, scenes depicting the forging of the sword of Siegfried, the Valhalla, and the Rhine Maidens, besides various smaller incidental panels. Here again the finished work in deep relief exhibited the marvellous ability of the artist for decoration fitted to environment and medium, and his extraordinary aptitude for the interpretation of given classical subjects along original and charming lines.

Following closely upon this came numerous commissions for interior decorations in private houses. One of these particularly is worthy of attention because of its unusual treatment. This is a frieze of small panels around the library of the house of Hall Watt, Esq., near Beverley, Yorkshire. The room was richly furnished and fitted in very dark mahogany. Bookcases ran to the lower edge of the frieze and their supports continued to the ceiling, dividing the frieze into panels about three feet six inches wide and two feet six inches deep.



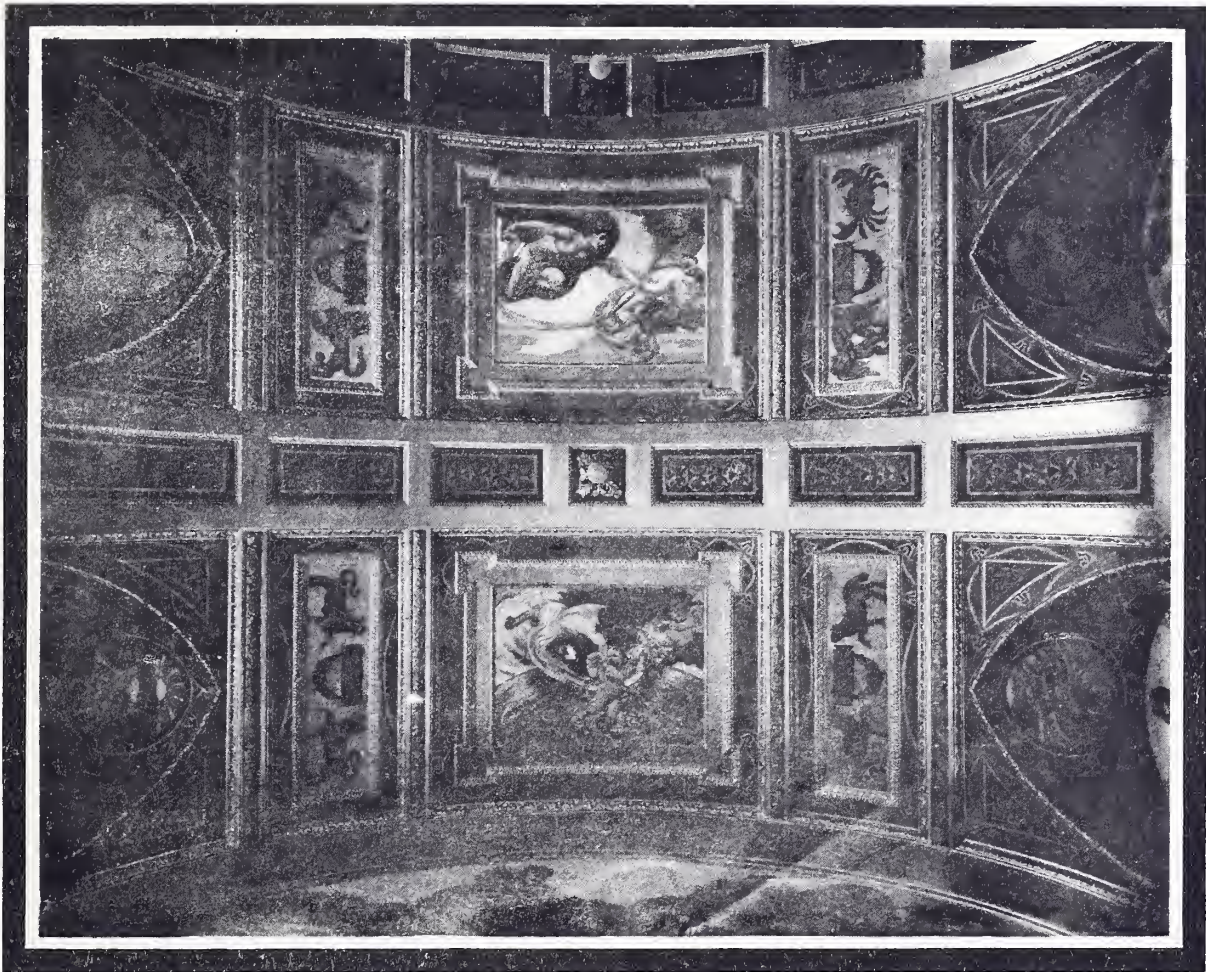


Plate 7.  
CEILING DECORATION.  
In the Board Room, Lloyd's Register, London.  
1900.





Plate 8.  
"THE SPIRIT OF THE SEA."  
Lunette in the Board Room, Lloyd's Register, London.  
1900.





In each of these Moira designed and Jenkins sculptured in relief subjects from classic author or famous poet, but so sombre were the surroundings that some special mode of treatment had to be invented to provide in this frieze the set-off to the environing profundity that was desirable. Moira overcame the gloom and provided the required effect of living, luxurious colour by first treating the decoration with gold and silver and then painting with thin stain colours over this base. The result exceeded expectations and the effect of the frieze was almost an illumination, vivifying and beautifying the whole room. The architect in this instance was W. F. Unsworth, Esq., F.R.I.B.A.

Library Frieze  
for  
Hall Watt, Esq.

Then came the Passmore Edwards Free Library at Shoreditch. Here, at the suggestion of the architect, H. T. Hare, Esq., F.R.I.B.A., Moira and Jenkins executed a frieze around the entrance hall, four feet six inches in depth. The subjects are from Shakespeare's plays, "The Merchant of Venice," "The Tempest," "Macbeth," and "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

In 1889 there had been published by Longmans a book by James Walter, "Shakespeare's True Life," which had been illustrated by Gerald Moira, mostly by means of pen drawings. The book was one of the successes of the year and it was the general consensus of opinion on the part of the reviewers that no small part of its success was due to "the exquisite illustrations. In Mr. Gerald E. Moira the author has found a worthy collaborator. There is not a page in the book without an illustration, and every one is a work of art." I quote from *The Standard* of December 19th, 1889. *The Times* of about the same date was even more eulogistic. Perhaps a quotation is justified to emphasize the success that attended even such early work of Moira's, when he was quite unknown and his name was but just in the making. "We fancied we knew Shakespeare's country pretty well (said *The Times*), and many pilgrimages to Stratford and the neighbourhood have made us tolerably familiar with it. But we confess that 'Shakespeare's True Life,' written by Mr. James Walter and illustrated by Mr. Gerald E. Moira, has shown us more beauties than we knew or suspected . . . We have always regarded South Warwickshire as one of the most picturesque districts in the English lowlands. There is no more stately timber in England than the oaks of Stoneleigh or the elms of Charlcote. The streams, though sluggish, are enamelled with water-lilies, and their winding reaches lose themselves in bosky bowers of the alder and the willow interwoven with the bramble. The lanes, with the wear of immemorial traffic, have often sunk out of sight between high banks draped with ground-ivy, like those of Brittany, and the villages, buried among hedgerows and embowered in orchards, come upon you at the sudden turns in a series of enchanting surprises. As for the cottages, such as that of Ann Hathaway at Shottery and of Mary Arden at Wilmcote, they would appear to have been built for all time. The great blackened beams that form the framework harden rather than decay with age, and as for the thatch, it used to be the fashion of the olden time to put a wagon load of wheat straw into a single gable end. All that, with very much more besides, Mr. Moira has put into this fascinating volume . . . Turn which way we will, in following Mr. Moira we cannot go wrong."

"Shakespeare's  
True Life."

The Passmore Edwards Library frieze, however, was a horse of a different colour. Here, in four scenes, in the comparatively intractable medium of coloured plaster, he had to construct what amounted to a suitable introduction to the wide realms of literature and at the same time build a decoration that should render a beautiful entrance hall yet more beautiful. Thus, aptly, he selected comedy and tragedy, tragi-comedy and comic-tragedy. The longest panel, as befits a scene that represents the moment of the consummation of justice, evil designs frustrated, generosity and courage triumphant, is given to that moment in "The Merchant of Venice" when Portia, gazing into the eyes of the vengeful few, iterates :

"Take then thy bond, thy pound of flesh ;  
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed  
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods  
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate  
Unto the state of Venice."

The Duke of Venice, dignity in his countenance and in every fold of his gorgeous robes, sits in the centre of the piece, Portia on his right. Shylock, horror dawning upon his features, leans upon a staff to the right of the panel. Bassanio, Antonio, Gratiano, Nerissa and officers of the court stand or sit, singly or in groups, on every honest face the reflection of joy in the "consummation much to be desired" and the final triumph of justice. The whole scene is so admirably drawn, so excellently placed and, more, so ably and yet gaily coloured that it is difficult to imagine a more pleasing and satisfactory interpretation of the centuries-old story than this sculptured panel twenty feet by four and a half which commands the staircase of the Library.

To the left of this and facing the door of the Hall is that scene of mirth from "The Merry Wives of Windsor" in which the bearded and corpulent Falstaff, disguised as the old woman of Brentford, runs the gauntlet of the suspicious husbands. The flirtatious knight is the centre of a group, surrounded by the five men, while Mrs. Page, on the left of the panel, leans forward beckoning :

"Come, Mother Prat, come give me thy hand,"

a smile of cynical amusement graven on her features ; and so faithfully is Falstaff portrayed that, looking at this frieze, one actually feels the old man's discomfort in his ungainly dress and sees in his hobbling attitude his inward perturbation and difficulty in maintaining the foolish part as the jealous Ford's blows rain upon his unprotesting back.

Opposite this again is that dramatic banquet scene from "Macbeth" where the new king, Macbeth, distraught with fear, addresses the apparition of his murdered predecessor :

"Avaunt ! and quit my sight ! let the earth hide thee !  
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold ;  
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with !"

Finally, above the remaining wall is depicted, in glowing colour and with delicate treatment, that whimsical "Tempest" scene :

"Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows."





Plate 9.  
Panel in Ceiling of Board Room, United Kingdom Provident Institution, London.  
1901.







Plate 10.  
"JUSTICE."  
Lunette in the Central Criminal Court, London.  
1902-1906.



Looking at the frieze as a whole, one is struck by the wide, all-inclusive range of its appeal, and at the same moment by its decorative beauty. Unfortunately, such coloured plaster work cannot adequately be displayed except in very large rooms or halls, and neither the Trocadero, the Throgmorton Restaurant, nor the Passmore Edwards Free Library really offers that ideal opportunity for the setting which would bring these charming and powerful friezes the appreciation of which they are certainly worthy for the breadth of their conception and the excellence of their execution. Moreover, instead of being cast in plaster, one regrets that they were not modelled in some more substantial and permanent medium.





### III.



URING the next few years, Gerald Moira turned his skill of hand and eye to many different forms and media of applied decoration. He designed and executed windows in stained glass and panels in mosaic; he painted walls or ceilings, exteriors or interiors, friezes or lunettes for such widely diverse buildings and purposes as a Liverpool church, business offices in the City of London, ocean liners, private houses, an exhibition pavilion in Paris, and the Central Criminal Court in Old Bailey, for Moira's art is as versatile as it is apt, as wide as it is original. After he had found himself in the coloured plaster work already described, he went on from success to greater success.

In addition to all this he was painting easel pictures.

The period when Lynn Jenkins and himself collaborated in coloured plaster really came to an end with the completion of the frieze in the Free Library at Shoreditch, although the two artists continued to share the same studio for some time, and the next important undertaking tackled by Moira was his exclusive work. This was the decoration of the Library and Vestry of the Unitarian Church at Ullet Road, Liverpool, a work he carried out with great distinction, and the one which was probably the main avenue to his appointment in September, 1900, as Professor of Mural and Decorative Painting at the Royal College of Art in South Kensington, a post he has filled with great credit and *éclat* for twenty-two years.

The Library and Vestry of this Church were the gift of the late Sir John Brunner, Bart. The actual work given to Moira was a decorated frieze around the Library, which he designed, modelled and painted entirely alone; the ceiling of the Library, a great barrelled roof about forty feet long and divided by rafters into three bays; and, in the vestry of the building, the ceiling and a large panel above the fireplace. All this took nearly three years to do.

The Library ceiling represented the chief part of the work (Plate 6). The scheme is unconventionally allegorical, yet eminently suited to its purpose and wholly sound artistically and technically. The Earth, occupying a large portion of the ceiling, is broadly treated. Above it and in the centre is the flaming sun of Perpetual Light, his rays darting in all directions; opposite the Earth a great figure of Time, raising into the air a beautiful woman, Truth. In the two hands of Truth are held respectively a lamp and a mirror. Beneath her, four figures strive unsuccessfully towards her. These are the four enemies of Truth, the cardinal vices, Ignorance, Envy, Superstition and Jealousy, from whose attacks Time now rescues her.

Grouped upon the Earth and in Space are numerous figures, some of them portrait figures and others allegorically represented, of many great men and women, important representatives of humanity in all departments of human activity, irrespective of creed or country, who look upon the triumph of Truth assisted by Time, Light and Knowledge, a triumph towards which all of them in their own lives have laboured unceasingly. Among them are David, Moses, Solomon, Plato, Aristotle, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Faraday, Newton, Phidias, Gallileo, Leonardo da Vinci, and many others. Following an old

End of  
Coloured Plaster  
Period.

Unitarian Church,  
Liverpool.



Plate 11.  
"MOSAIC LAW."  
Lunette in the Central Criminal Court, London.  
1902-1906.







Plate 12.  
"ENGLISH LAW."  
Lunette in the Central Criminal Court, London (from a photograph of the Cartoon).  
1902-1906

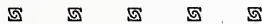


tradition of mediæval and Renaissance painters Moira included also the donor, Sir John Brunner, among them.

Dark clouds interrupt the beneficent rays of Light in Space, and rocks break up an otherwise smooth and lovely sea. From the lamp grasped in the hand of Truth long slender lines curve and curl gracefully about all these figures, binding and connecting them and signifying their common destiny and purpose.

This ceiling is wonderful in its conception and brilliant in its execution ; rich in its painting and universal in its appeal ; a sermon and a parable as befits a Church ; a thing of beauty as befits a splendid building.

The ceiling of the Vestry is divided into four triangular spaces, which are filled by four pictures, representing respectively Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Charity, each of these subjects being treated conventionally but with striking and beautiful effect. Beneath this is a picture of the flaming sun rising majestically above the horizon. Finally, a lunette at one end of the Library roof bears a Tree of Knowledge, with the names of more of Life's leading representatives inscribed upon its fruit.

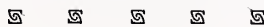


Following the completion of this magnificent decoration, Moira's attention was diverted into a very different channel. In 1899, Mr. T. E. Collcutt, F.R.I.B.A., was building a Pavilion for the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company at the International Exhibition at Paris. He invited Gerald Moira to decorate it. In January, 1900, the artist therefore went to Paris and in the short space of time between then and May of that year performed prodigies of labour : for Moira, if necessity demands it, is capable of designing and painting tremendous mural decorations in a very short period, and, extraordinary as it may seem, although done so rapidly they bear all the hall-marks of excellence and fine art.

P. & O. Pavilion,  
International  
Exhibition, Paris

This Pavilion involved both exterior and interior decoration. Outside was a coloured decoration under the loggia entrance and a coloured plaster relief around the central dome. (This was, I believe, the last coloured plaster relief done by Moira, and incidentally the last occasion in which he collaborated with Lynn Jenkins.) Inside the building he painted panels in the large dome and the pendentives, and there were two large lunettes. Moreover, he became responsible for and supervised the whole of the internal colour scheme of the Pavilion.

Looking back over work of this kind, it seems a thousand pities that it is invariably doomed so soon to destruction ; that though the most wonderful gem may be transferred from the creative brain of a great artist with all the skill and technique of his experience and genius, it must perish when its immediate purpose is fulfilled and the building is demolished to make room for something else, its life being often only a few months. On the other hand, one is consoled by the thought that the application of ability and skill can be used to make even the most transitory building beautiful, and, although the work itself may not last, its influence remains to add to the general sum of effects of beauty upon those who have been privileged to enjoy it.





The successful Unitarian Church ceiling at Liverpool soon brought Gerald Moira a similar commission, this time in the city of London. Mr. Colcutt, who had already put a considerable amount of work in his way in connection with the Paris Pavilion and the saloons of certain P. & O. steamships (with which we will deal more fully later), was engaged on new offices for Lloyd's Register, and Professor Moira was instructed to decorate the ceilings of the boardroom and the staircase and to design and make the big stained-glass windows to light the staircase.

The boardroom ceiling (Plate 7) was a difficult problem, and one that tested all Moira's ability and now maturing genius. It is a large barrelled ceiling, divided into three bays. The centre bay was broken up into many smaller panels, richly bordered. In these Moira painted allegorical figures representing the four ancient elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water; and these in their turn are flanked by smaller panels containing the signs of the Zodiac.

In four large outer lunettes were painted spirited, charming and graceful allegorical representations of the Four Winds of Heaven; and at one end is a tremendous lunette, (Plate 8) running the length of the room, in which one sees a beautiful female figure, the Spirit of the Sea, attended by her sea-maidens, driving a team of scaly and monster sea-horses through tempestuous waves.

The artist came back to realism, however, when he designed the windows for the staircase. In these, beautiful examples of the highest art of illumination, is shown the ancient and honourable trade of shipbuilding, the main themes being the building of a sailing ship and the building of a steamship.

The ceiling of the staircase dealt again with ships. Here a series of four roundels records the evolution of ocean vessels from the early sailing ships to the days of all-pervading steam. First a Greek tea-clipper, propelled by sail and oar; then a masted sailing ship, its sails domed out by an imaginary wind; in the third of the series one of those quaint vessels that were neither wood nor steel—part timber, part iron—a record of that passing phase when the mercantile marine developed so rapidly; and finally a modern ocean liner completes the series and brings their story up to date. All these are connected by broad bands of floral decoration and the remainder of the ceiling and staircase consists of harmonious plain colours relieved by black marble bands.

The complete decorative scheme, whether regarded panel by panel, lunette by lunette, or as a complete whole, is superb. It is a true sign of London's greatness that here in the heart of the city, in the very axial centre of the world's commerce, should exist so priceless and perfect a gem of art. This magnificent office building, where the tangled ends of a mighty Empire's shipping are held and controlled, is indeed in no whit outdone by the fabled wonders of ancient oriental palaces. There are gold and precious stones and ornament, and all the splendour that modern science and vast wealth can jointly assemble, and it is good to contemplate that not the least of the treasures in this unparalleled office palace is the work of a modern artist and that that work adds richness to its magnificence.





Plate 13.

ARMORIAL STAINED GLASS WINDOW.

On Staircase of Central Criminal Court, London (photographed from the Cartoon).

1902-1906







Plate 14.  
THE RUSSIAN BALLET.  
Water Colour.  
1917.







Plate 15.  
THE CRYSTAL VASE.  
1909.

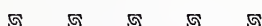


Entirely different was Moira's next undertaking, although it too was the interior decoration of a palatial London office. This was a ceiling of the Board Room of the United Kingdom Temperance and General Provident Institution in the Strand (Plate 9).

United Kingdom  
Provident  
Institution,  
London.

The ceiling is twenty-five feet in length, with rounded ends. In the centre Moira painted a dignified figure of a woman, Providence, surrounded by children and the fruits of the earth. Kneeling to her in an attitude of supplication, Motherhood receives her benediction.

At one end, Vice and Drunkenness mounted on a great-winged eagle, fly before Temperance, who has seized the reins, while Humanity, typified in the stalwart and muscular figure of a man, climbs upwards. Opposite, Knowledge emerges from behind the curtains of the unknown.



Among the mural decorations of this period of Moira's work were some important panels in mosaic, particularly a series of six in the Holborn Restaurant, London, and one in the School of Art at Leeds. Those in Holborn represent Music, Dancing, Pageantry, Feasting, Oratory and Singing. They are beautifully and skilfully worked in harmony with the tone of the surrounding red Verona marble in which the general scheme was carried out, and with their liberal but ingenious use of gold add much to the decorative effect of the Hall.

Mosaic,  
Holborn  
Restaurant,  
London.



At this time Gerald Moira was also devoting much attention to stained glass and, in addition to those occasions where he employed stained glass as part of a larger scheme of general decoration, as for instance in Lloyd's Register, and later in the Central Criminal Court, he was also receiving and carrying out commissions for windows singly.

Perhaps the best example of the time, excluding the armorial windows of the Old Bailey, is that which was done for Mr. Andrew Carnegie at Skibo Castle, his country seat in Scotland. It consists of five lights. The centre is occupied by the figure of St. Gilbert, whose name is connected with the Castle by reason of the fact that he was Bishop of Dornoch in 1225 and made Skibo his palace. It is flanked on the left by the bearded figure of Sigurd, the Dane, who built the Castle in 946, while opposite is a XVIIth Century cavalier, the Marquis of Montrose, who, so local history tells, was, at one time, trapped near Skibo.

Skibo Castle  
Windows

The two outer lights relate the pictorial life-story of Andrew Carnegie. On the extreme left the cottage where he was born, and, in a small panel above, a representation of the sailing ship that took him across the Atlantic to seek fortune, surmounted by the date 1848. On the far right the remaining window bears in a panel a view of a modern ocean liner, over which is the date 1898, and below a representation of the Castle itself, surrounded by a wood.

The general scheme of these windows is very fine. Their colours are rich and luxurious, and do much to add to the splendour of the magnificent Scottish edifice of which they are a part.

Another window which is well worthy of record is one executed at about the same period in Woodlands Church in memory of Dr. Henry James Younger. The window is a symbolical representation of the text, "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise



with healing in His wings." A figure of Righteousness forms the centre of the design, and beneath are two figures who represent Humanity in need of comfort and healing. A suggestion of landscape is given to the design by an encircling river.

This window is remarkable for its richness of colour and fine transparency. At the same time, Moira has succeeded in putting into it a wealth of deep religious feeling which makes it singularly beautiful in view of its purpose and its place.

In all Moira's stained glass decorations, the actual manufacture of the glass is carried out from his cartoons and designs under his personal supervision. He possesses great appreciation—almost, one might say, reverence, for the intrinsic beauty of the material. He will have nothing to do with painted glass, although there are many artists who use this form of decoration, and many windows in important places which, perhaps deservedly enough, receive much attention and admiration, but which are not in the true sense "stained" glass at all. Moira early joined that band of artists who desire to restore to this ancient art its high prestige and purity of motive. He believes in the capacity of manufacturers to produce in the medium itself the rich shades of colour in his designs, and consequently finds in this form of decoration an outlet for all his love of exotic colour, and a magnificent means of expression of his sense of design.





Plate 16.  
THE SUMMIT OF THE SLAG HEAP.  
1920.





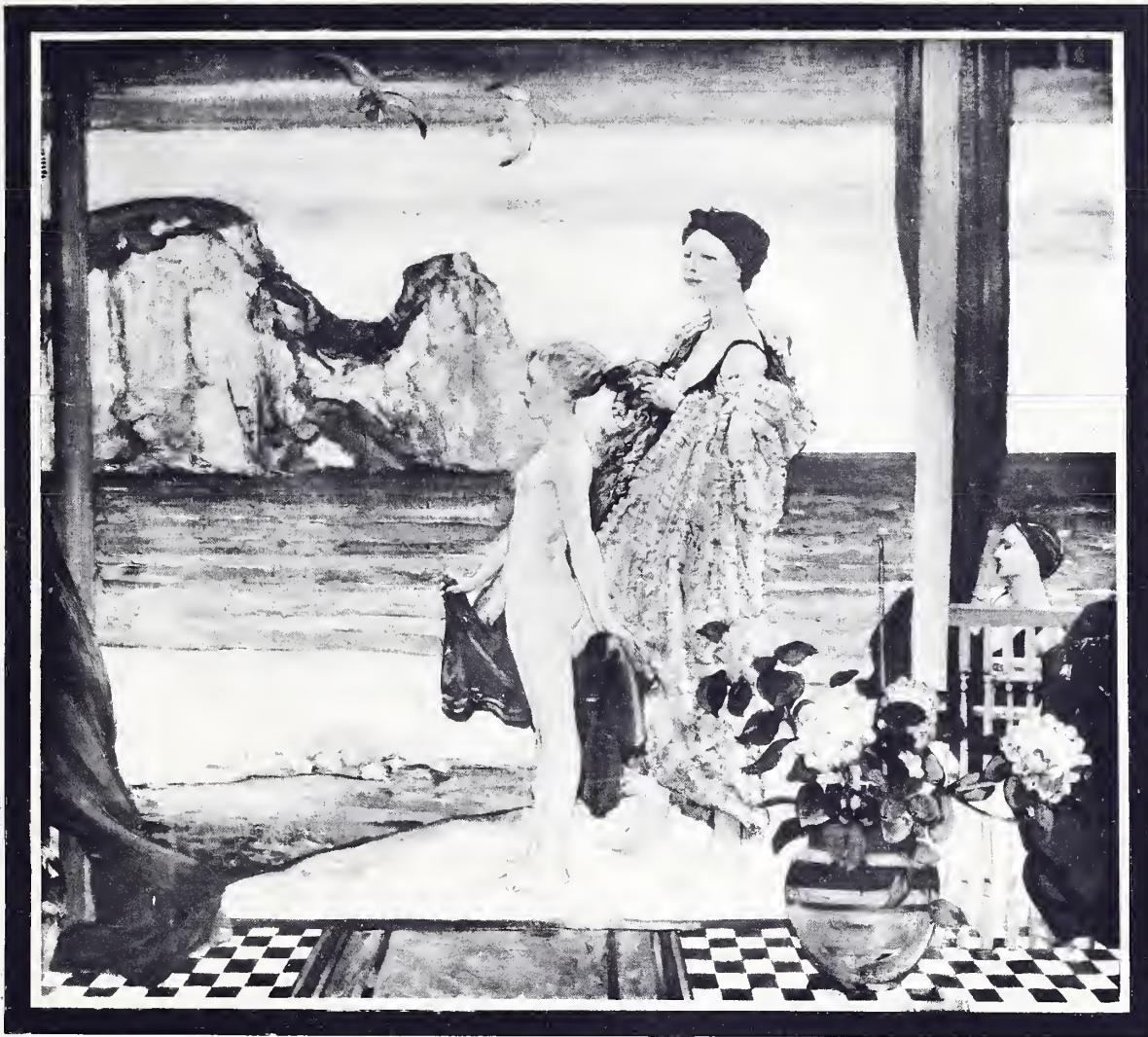


Plate 17.  
THE BATHERS.  
1911.







The Central  
Criminal Court,  
Old Bailey.

Here come now to what is, in Moira's own opinion, his masterpiece, his mural decorations and stained-glass windows in the new Central Criminal Court, at the top of the historic Old Bailey, a stone's throw away from that majestic, all-commanding monument of English architecture, St. Paul's Cathedral.

Here Moira's powers reached their fullest maturity. All the previous work he had done, splendid and able though most of it was, had been a long and gently-rising crescendo of effort to apply his natural genius and the results of his years of training and practical experience to the art of mural decoration, which reached its highest note in the three-years' task between 1902 and 1906, of embellishing that great new stone building on the site of the Old Bailey where for centuries British justice has been administered without fear or favour.

The choice of painters fell to W. E. Mountford, Esq., the architect, who went to the late G. F. Watts, R.A. for advice, and it was on the recommendation of Watts, himself one of the great masters of decorative painting, that Moira was chosen to decorate the South Vestibule of the Great Hall, the Dome, and the ceiling and windows of the staircase, and Sir W. B. Richmond, K.C.B., R.A., the North Vestibule of the Great Hall.

The decoration which fell to Moira's lot in the Southern Vestibule consisted of three great lunettes, and never has he more worthily justified his high rank as a mural decorator than he did by his selection and treatment of the subjects with which he filled these three tremendous spaces.

In the centre lunette is "Justice Receiving the Homage of the Empire;" on the right, "Mosaic Law"; and on the left, "English Law": surely, in their perfect fitness of their subject to their place alone, ideal. A simple but a masterly conception.

"Justice Receiving the Homage of the Empire" (Plate 10) is a picture Moira-like. In the centre stands a statuesque figure of Justice, her face an index of dignity and honour. Her right hand grasps a mighty sword, perpendicularly poised, whose point rests upon the topmost of a flight of steps, and in the left a short chain from which depends a pair of scales, their balance "perfect, exact and true."

"Justice  
Receiving the  
Homage of the  
Empire."

Grouped upon either side are various figures, and Moira has made these more than ordinarily significant by portraying famous men of his own generation as well as figures allegorically representing particular phases of life and conditions of mankind. The group includes the leading representatives of Religion in the persons of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Newman, and Dr. Hermann Adler, the Chief Rabbi; then the Law in those of the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice. The distinguished figure of Lord Roberts and that of a private soldier typify the British Army. An Indian Prince, who kneels before "Justice," represents the width and breadth of Empire. Finally, a stalwart blacksmith bears witness to the vigour of industry, and, seated on the steps is a charming group of mother and children typifying at once the people and family life. Behind all this the

noble, decoratively-treated outline of St. Paul's Cathedral lends dignity and magnificence to the design.

In this lunette, with its wide comprehensiveness of soldier, statesman, ecclesiastic and people, Moira has created an epic work and achieved a masterpiece. Justice acknowledges neither creed nor rank. All are equal. Yet is she acknowledged and supported by every class and type.

Beneath the picture, the artist has inscribed in clear and vivid lettering, in the form of a decorative, ribbon-like frieze which is built around the Hall, the words, *Poise the Cause of Justice in the Scale.*

"Mosaic Law."

"Mosaic Law" (Plate 11) is a lunette of the same great size. It bears thirteen figures, in the centre of which are Moses and Aaron, holding the tablets on which are inscribed the ten commandments. The white-robed figure of Moses, patriarchal and impressive, breathes the spirit of ancient law, law carried out by wise and kingly rulership. In the background, shadowy but majestic, stands the rugged, many-faceted Mount Sinai. About the central figure of the prophet are grouped the elders of the Israelites, picturesquely costumed, in attitude of reverent attention to the divine commands.

Beneath, and continuing the written line, are painted the words, "*Moses gave unto the people the Laws of God.*"

"English Law."

"English Law" (Plate 12) is the opposite lunette. For the subject for this, the artist has turned back to the days of King Alfred.

The scheme is carried out in the same restrained, effective style as that in each of the other two lunettes. Large as is the work, there are but thirteen figures in the whole composition, and each of them is treated in the same severe and dignified manner. Again there is a series of steps, though in this instance in the main they number only two, with a third higher step at each end.

In the centre of the piece, Alfred the Great is seated, with long white hair and noble head surmounted by a simple crown of gold. His hoary beard flows down on to his voluminously draped garment. In the left hand he grasps a roll of manuscript; his right is extended towards his counsellors.

About the king are old men—Druids, counsellors and captains—the fathers and leaders of the early Britons. A monk-garbed ancient holds upright a shepherd's crook. Before him a little group of three represent the people of the island, one of them a boy who clasps in his arms a wolf-hound.

In the background that strange architectural device of earliest England, the great, ungainly rocks of Stonehenge, with their high and uncouth arches, overshadows the kingly group, an echo of that ancient temple that stood for what was then considered Justice and the Law. Behind this again, solid rough-hewn masonry stretches in an endless wall built to withstand all invaders and outlive the lives of many men.





Plate 18.  
LONDON  
1910.







Plate 19.  
A JULY DAY.  
1915.





Finally, the line of writing is completed under this lunette with the quotation, *Right Lives by Law and Submits by Power*.

These three panels are not only executed with monumental simplicity and nobility, and clarity of design, but are eminently satisfying in achievement of fitness to purpose. Moreover, their colouring, typically Moira-like, is rich and splendid, so that they emanate life and the gloriousness of living and doing. They cover a world of thought and throw a significant light upon the ideals of a great people, exemplified in this magnificent building where Justice is tempered with Mercy.

In the Dome the scheme is carried out a little further yet. In the four panels into which it is structurally divided, Moira has painted four allegorical figures, "Art," "Truth," "Labour," and "Learning," and each one of these figures bears, in its combined simplicity and dignity, the imprint of his genius. In the spaces between these figures are smaller panels embellished with the city arms.

Not by any means the least important examples of Gerald Moira's work in the Central Criminal Court are the two stained glass windows that light the main staircase and a side of the upper Central Hall. It is doubtful if there can anywhere be found two more interesting or pleasing instances of the art of stained glass illumination than are these two, one above the other—certainly not in any modern building.

Stained Glass  
Windows,  
Old Bailey.

The richness of the colour schemes, in which reds, deep purples and glowing orange predominate, and the individual character of the design combine to give an effect that is infinitely satisfying and peaceful.

The upper window is circular and about six feet in width. Moira has woven into the design the armorial bearings of the Recorders of the City of London. The idea is as ingenious as the execution is brilliant. The deep, soft colours are excellently balanced, and daringly as they are combined are none the less delicate and harmonious in their complete effect. The window is sunk into a deep bay, the wall being of tremendous thickness, and this has a curious effect of carrying the window into the distance, rather adding to than detracting from its effectiveness, except that the projecting wall tends to cut off a thin crescent from the bottom of the window when it is viewed from the Great Hall.

The lower and larger window is situated directly below the armorial window, and whereas the upper one is circular in shape, this is of the "arch" type. Here again are repeated the same rich, deep shades of reds and purples, woven with whites and greens into floral and allegorical designs with Moira's unerring skill of design and colour management. The heavy lead lines are manipulated with singularly telling effect.

In the lower part of the window are three scroll-shaped sections which tell the historical story of the building. In the centre, on a two-piece panel of deep violet, is painted a reproduction of the external facade of the new building, over which are inscribed the words: "New Central Criminal Court, 1906." To the left of this representation is a small panel



bearing the words : “ This Building was Erected by the Corporation of the City of London 1902-1906 ” ; and on the right in a third panel, the names of its creators, in the following order :

GEO. MOUNTFORD, Architect.

F. W. POMEROY, Sculptor.

SIR WM. RICHMOND, R.A., Painter.

GERALD MOIRA, Painter.

Thus are perpetuated the names of those who have made this great monument to Justice worthy of its great purpose. The decorations by Gerald Moira and Sir William Richmond although they are utterly different in motive and plan, have added an intimate warmth and interest to bare walls that would otherwise have weighed upon the visitor with a forbidding austerity, dignifying and at the same time beautifying the Hall of which they are an integral part, and the effect is heightened and re-doubled by the stained glass windows by means of which Moira has contrived to soften and pacify the lofty grandeur of the interior of the building. Thanks chiefly to Moira's unfailing sense of “ fitness to purpose ” his mural and illuminative decorations have in this monument to his genius, secured and confirmed for him his rightful place among the modern masters of decoration.





Plate 20.  
FERRETING.  
1921.







Plate 21.  
THE CORNISH FLORAL DANCE  
1922.







Plate 22.  
LUNETTE  
In the Music Room, P. & O. SS. "Mantua."  
1912.







HE somewhat irregular intervals between mural and ceiling decorations and stained glass windows, and such time as was left over from his professorial duties at the Royal College of Art, was devoted by Moira to the making of easel pictures. Although he has made mural decoration his main work in life and has achieved in that direction one of the topmost places among contemporary artists, his pictures have brought him hardly less distinction—probably for the natural reason that his infallible decorative skill must and does show itself in and through all his work.

With occasional exceptions no year has passed since he gained his professorship, or at any rate since the completion of his long task at the Old Bailey, but he has somehow found time and opportunity to create one or more pictures to be sent to and hung in the Royal Academy. Besides these, many water-colours, pastels (a favourite medium) and lithographs now scattered about the world in private houses and public galleries bear witness to his indefatigable industry and remarkable and versatile talent.

Easel Pictures.

As one would naturally expect, his pictures are in the main large in size, for although he has on occasion given his attention to smaller works, the tendency that arises no doubt out of his intimacy with big decorations that run in tens of feet, and in which sometimes a single figure will reach eight or nine feet in height, is to deal always with canvas of considerable area. Strangely enough, however, two of his more intense pictures are not of this class. One of them, "The Crystal Vase," measures only thirty-eight inches by forty, and the other, "The Summit of the Slag-heap" is somewhat smaller.

"The Crystal Vase" (Plate 15) was painted and exhibited at Burlington House in 1909. The picture is that of a girl rather more than half length, nude except for a cloth of rich, brown, flowing material draped across the lower part and supported in the left hand. On the right is a large, glorious, crystal vase, its lid encircled by the right hand and arm of the woman. In the deep-cut convolutions of the glass a myriad lights scintillate and sparkle, red, blue, yellow, as the spectrum is broken up and thrown out from its glancing edges. The marvellous iridescence of crystal is truthfully and delightfully expressed in every brush-stroke, ranging through every rich gradation of colour. And the soft, creamy skin of the naked human body, with its seductive shadows and entrancing curves, serves to accentuate and to be accentuated by the glowing, pleasantly-glinting life and light in this excellent example of the glass-cutter's art. Only a Moira could have achieved the wonderful decorative juxtaposition of living woman and artificial vase and have treated the two-fold subject with such a wealth of rich, vibrant, expressive feeling and beauty. Its drawing is perfect, its composition is unimpeachable, its treatment is masterly. And through it all there is discernible a quality that defies definition, a quality that stamps it all as more than merely technical, as, indeed, sublime.

"The Crystal Vase."

Strangely enough, "The Summit of the Slag-heap" though executed ten years later, is subtly suggestive of the same indefinable quality. There is in these two pictures—and to some extent in another of Gerald Moira's paintings, "The Bathers,"—an elusive feeling of

"The Summit of  
the Slag-heap."

romance, of something deeper than the simple record of material phenomena. While "The Crystal Vase" is half still-life and half figure-study, "The Summit of the Slag-heap" is an exercise in tragedy, and "The Bathers" a record of a common scene of the water's edge; and yet, notwithstanding the width asunder of their subjects, every one of these three pictures bears the same subtle trace and mark of that infinite understanding or emotion, whatever it may be, that indicates to whoever has eyes to see and thoughts to read the true genius of the true artist. There is an inexpressible content in each one of them that makes it a masterpiece and that moves the susceptible observer to a feeling akin to awe.

"The Summit of the Slag-heap" (Plate 16) is startlingly different in subject from "The Crystal Vase." It was painted in 1920 for exhibition at the Leicester Galleries, where it was one of the twenty-five pictures of "Twenty-five British Painters." Whereas "The Crystal Vase" is a picture suggestive of luxury, "The Summit of the Slag-heap" is suggestive at once of toil and sorrow. In the centre of the canvas a woman kneels silhouetted against a dull sky, her head bowed in an attitude of gentle submission and infinite despair and hopelessness and resignation. Beneath her are outlined the black masses that one realises on sight as excellently indicative of the sorrows of arduous, unremitting, soul-destroying labour—a poem of toiling wretchedness—a vision of a world without ambition and without joy. It is a picture that calls for tears, a picture in which one discerns the secrets of the veritable bottom of life, with all the time this wonderful tender woman looking down in pity and understanding ineffable. It is the accurate delineation of that country where toil is without end, life without hope, eternity without joy. It is the idealisation of sorrow. It is the measure of immeasurable pathos. And yet mysteriously it expresses the Sublime Great Accident of All Things wherein in evil is incipient good. It is, after all, a parable of hope above hopelessness and a lesson in eternal pity.

"The Bathers."

"The Bathers," 1911, (Plate 17) strikes a totally different note. This is a large canvas, the figures little short of life size. The observer stands upon a sunny, check-patterned portico looking out over a calm blue-green sea. The central figure is that of a woman. She wears a bathing costume over which is thrown with apparent negligence a fleecy wrap. Before her stands the dainty, nude and graceful figure of a young girl. They are mother and daughter.

In the middle distance a rugged island cliff rears itself into the sky. Overhead a pair of sea-gulls flutter. Two slender pillars define the limits of the porch and on the right a second woman is seen seated beyond the fence that joins a pillar. Two rich red curtains hang from the unseen roof of the verandah. A rotund vase of big-petalled flowers stands upon its chequered floor. A strand of pebbled, golden sand divides the water from the portico.

Such are the bare constituents of the picture. But it is more than that. It is a charming and beautiful record of the gentle love of a mother for her child, of the budding pride and incipient destiny of youth and beauty.

I have classed these three pictures more or less together because of that mysterious quality that is common to them all, that transcends mere subject, that is not a matter of a period, that is not all technique even, but that is certainly the quality that makes pictures greater than mere paint dexterously and cunningly applied to canvas. One almost wonders





Plate 23.  
LUNETTE.  
In the Smoke Room, P. & O. SS. "Medina."  
1912.





if in these examples of his art Moira did not paint "better than he knew." Not that these are the only works or even the only easel pictures of his that justify his eminence among his contemporaries. By no means. "July Day" and "The Cornish Floral Dance," for instance, again reflect his magic power, and, no doubt, other pictures, which the writer had not had the privilege to study at first hand (photographs are really inadequate to convey the spirit of the work—they can only show the letter), contain the mystic quality of genius too; but in those I have endeavoured to describe, there is, I submit, that incomprehensible "soul" that places them above others, even above others from the same potent brush.

"London" (Plate 18) is a colossal picture—indeed it should really be classed as decoration—eighteen feet in height, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1910. It took London by storm. I can perhaps best describe it by quoting briefly from some of the numerous contemporary notices:

On the 1st May, 1910, *The Observer* said of this picture: "It is a thousand pities that Professor Moira's splendid decorative painting, "London," is not destined for some public building where it may serve as ocular demonstration of the manner in which a wall decoration should be treated by a modern artist . . . . It is true Professor Moira's crowded group of people—workers and idlers, rich and poor, children and grown-ups, all assembled under an imaginary classic portico by the river opposite St. Paul's Cathedral, and the wharves and business houses that line the bank—are a little too playful and lack the monumental character which is expected in mural decoration on this scale. But apart from this the panel has a noble rhythm of design, which is infinitely more pleasing than the monotony of symmetrical arrangement, and a corresponding rhythm of beautiful colour dominated by the blue of the clouded sky which is echoed throughout the lower part of the composition . . . ."

"London."

*The Standard* of May 3rd: "But the last word must be reserved for a decorative picture that reaches excellence and fascination, and is very near to greatness—Mr. Gerald Moira's 'London.' You look upon the city from the south side of the river; before you all the variety of association and form enumerated by Wordsworth in the famous sonnet that Westminster Bridge, and not the City, inspired. In the near foreground figures on a large scale are disposed most skilfully. The thing is one great whole; and it somehow is so notwithstanding the quite un-English character of most of the people. Intelligent and pleasant French tourists, one might say—come over with return tickets. Somehow you do not grumble at it. Besides, in one or two of the figures the note of characteristic industry and typical labour is struck nobly. It is a London that is lived in as well as a London that is seen. Its profound pictorial qualities and high decorative sense would make Mr. Moira's picture the worthy companion of the finest instances of decoration at this moment in the Avenue D'Antin. Certainly by La Touche and Aman Jean and René Ménard might be placed this scarcely less than august utterance of Mr. Gerald Moira."

Again, *The Evening Standard* of May 4th said: "Room X is dominated by Mr. Gerald Moira's big decoration of 'London.' In spite of its scale, this . . . can be judged as a picture. It is in the convention of an easel as distinct from a wall painting, and though admirably decorative in composition is treated with only the necessary avoidance of realism."

As a rule, in work of this size the most a painter can do is to fill up well-designed spaces with good colour, but Mr. Moira has made his actual paint interesting, and his brush work is perfectly adapted to the scale of the whole. The view, St. Paul's from the Surrey side, is characteristic and yet unhackneyed; the symbolical mingling of glitter, grime, pleasure, poverty and labour looks natural and not arranged with a moral, and even the unsettled weather seems typical of the subject. Mr. Moira is to be congratulated on a very fine piece of work."

And so on. These are fair extracts from the consensus of contemporary criticism.

A picture to which the word "gorgeous" very aptly applies is "The Blue Carpet" (Plate 5). This was painted in 1917, and again was an Academy work. The carpet is the luxuriant soft carpet of Nature; the blue is the beautiful blue of countless flowers and the summer sky. In the foreground a woman reclines, seated easily on the ground, her back resting against the trunk of a great tree. Two boys, one lying full length, the other erect, complete the human models except for two half-perceived figures of children in the distance. Between the three, and spread upon the grass and the flowers are the paraphernalia of a picnic. A huge moss-covered boulder fills the middle distance, allowing just a glimpse beyond of sunny, golden landscape. A rich blue sky, paling down horizonwards, is over everything.

"The Blue Carpet" is a magic carpet—well calculated to carry one away to a land where Nature is free and open, where innumerable blue-bells bloom, where geologic rocks and sunshine between them dissipate all the morbid sundry little worries of the present, where life is an easy resting on Nature's own blue carpet. This is the effect of this picture—decorative and superlatively happy and peaceful.

In "July Day" (Plate 19), Gerald Moira's Academy picture of 1915, there is again the sympathetic juxtaposition of startling living colour in pleasing contrasts and form. It has some points in common with "The Bathers." There is the rich, green-streaked blue of semi-placid water, huge white, moss-tipped cliffs, a brilliant blue sky relieved by clouds of fleecy white, and on the foreshore women and a man. Blue, red and white are the key colours. A woman in the immediate foreground is decked in white blouse, brown skirt and a cloak of flaming scarlet; the same resplendent hue is repeated in the stripes of a wrap that is being cast aside by a girl a little further away, revealing a pleasing and graceful figure clad in a flesh-fitting costume. Between the two, a woman, with blue-striped blouse and apron, dandles a naked, rosy-cheeked babe, and on the left, half-hidden by a wall of rock, the figure of a man, wearing about his loins a covering of red, completes, with one exception, the group. The exception is another girl, more distant, who laves her feet in a small creek that washes from the main sea. Little splashes of red in the foreground add the final harmonious touches to the pleasant scene. This picture was purchased by the Trustees of the Canadian National Gallery at Ottawa.

Another picture that serves well to typify Moira's unerring composition and masterly control of large canvases is a group portrait of his children which was seen at Burlington House in 1916, together with another large decoration, "The War Workers"—his chief works of that year.

"The Blue Carpet."

"July Day."





Plate 24.  
LUNETTE.  
In the Smoke Room, P. & O. SS. "Medina."  
1912.





Plate 25.  
TWO PANELS.  
In the Music Saloon, P. & O. SS. "Medina."  
1912.







Plate 26.  
CANADIAN LUMBERMEN IN WINDSOR PARK.  
1917.





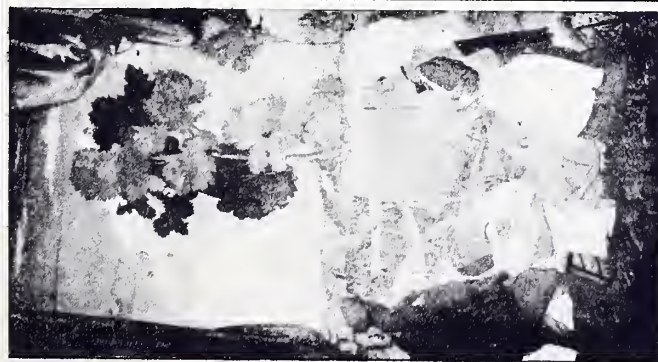
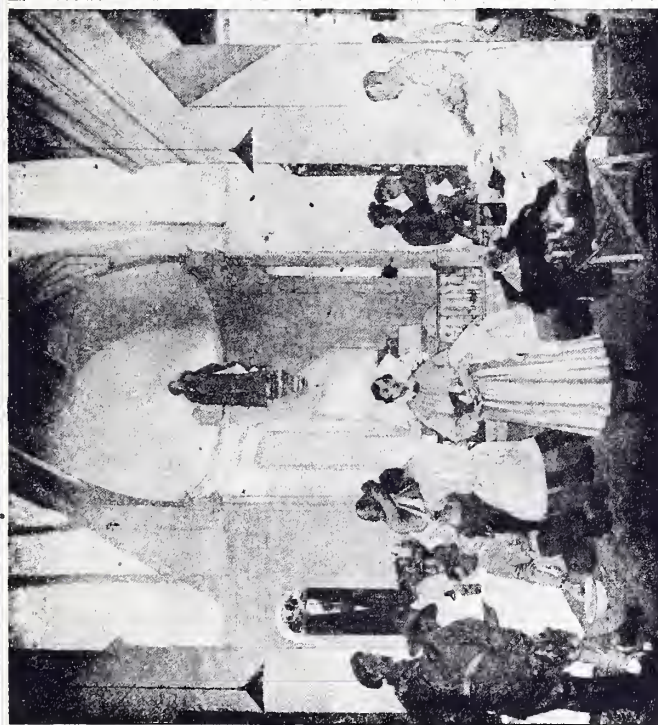
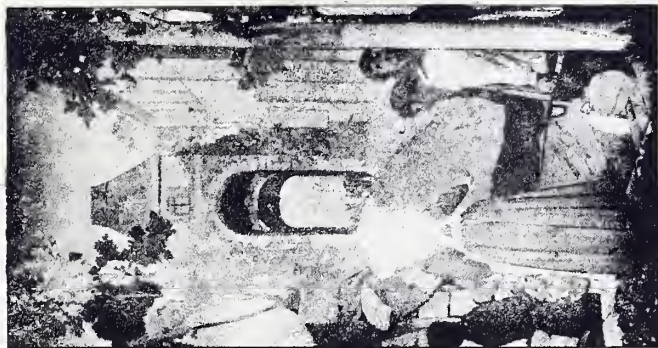


Plate 27  
No. 3 CANADIAN STATIONARY HOSPITAL AT DOULLENS.  
1918.







Plate 28.  
A WAR ALLEGORY.  
1916.





The portrait group shows four young boys, their ages varying from two to six. They are apparently haphazardly grouped (though indeed that seeming carelessness of arrangement becomes on examination a skilfulness) in a sunlit room. The three elder children are wearing white, fleecy woollen suits and the "baby" a frock of some white material that accords perfectly with the remainder of the picture. The white surrounding walls and the pleasant sunny aspect of the rooms with its vision of a beautiful garden seen through the white-painted French window; even the lightness and the whiteness of the furniture, and the odd splashes of colour in cushions here and there, all go to make a happy portrait record and an effective, pleasing picture.

"Sons of  
Gerald Moira."

Not the least quality about this soundly-versatile artist's work is the demonstration of his ability to take a given space of any shape or size and convert it to a perfectly-balanced work of art. This he has more than once shown in circular pictures, as also in a series of cross-shaped decorations in a London Church (which are dealt with in a later chapter).

One of his best circular pictures is "Pastoral" (Plate 1). This was shown first in 1921 at Toronto and later at the "*Colour Magazine*" Exhibition at the Grosvenor Galleries. The picture is reproduced in these pages and can therefore be judged by the reader for himself, but I cannot pass mention of it without reference to the delightful colour-scheme, with its imposing construction of enormous mechanism; the fantastic combination of man and Pan; the inviting woodland scene and tree-topped hill with its coaxing, sunny, winding path. Even the glorious blue patches of the early autumn sky lend their dynamic colour with pleasing effectiveness to the whole, and the pleasant rural figures of woman and child have their place. Altogether it is as excellent an example of what can be done by flawless composition with quaint subject and difficult design as one might ever find.

"Pastoral"

A picture that for sheer, luxuriant, brilliant, rich, exotic colour and grace of design, that comes near to surpassing in those qualities anything that Moira has done—it is Moira-out-Moira'd—is "La Lune," his Academy work of 1912. It is reminiscent of the wonderful, glorious plumage of birds of paradise, of bright-hued tropical flora. One hardly imagines an ordinary palette capable of producing so gay and vivid a galaxy of colour. But then, Moira's is rarely an ordinary palette.

"La Lune."

And with it all, "La Lune" is a charming picture, as it is a quaint conception. A dusky, beautiful girl reclines at full length on a bank of cloud, one arm resting easily on an end of the crescent moon. Her clothing is the weird drapery of the milky way that changes subtly and fantastically from stormy firmament to streaming waves of seething, gossamer cloud. Cupids, not too conventional, attend this Queen of the Evening. The silver moon casts a spectral radiance that gives a weird quality to the rich rainbow hues of the heavy, surging clouds eddying about the recumbent figure, and a thousand tiny star-points flicker out of and between their dense and rolling masses.

Two other important pictures are "Ferretting" and "The Cornish Floral Dance." They are two pictures quite different in treatment and in subject—the first is a charming decorative picture, its size 38 ins. × 38 ins.; the other, somewhat larger, would better be described as a pictorial decoration.

“ Ferreting ” (Plate 20) is a painting that bears a charm peculiar to itself. It is a cruel sport turned into a thing of beauty. Since this book is not the place for a sermon I must content myself with dealing with the painting ; if its inner meaning is to point a finger at wanton cruelty performed in the name of sport then the pill is deliciously coated.

Three great boulders that tell the age-long geologic story of Nature take their important places on the canvas. One of these, only partly seen, forms a natural seat for a mother. Lolling negligently against a second, that rears up in the centre, a purple-sweatered, healthy boy of ten or so takes a lazy, nonchalant interest in the business of the sport. Beneath, a brown-smocked, dark-haired lad, hands upraised, awaits the exit, from a dark hole below the boulder, of the ferret—and the rabbit. Already two of the furry animals have fallen victims to the game. Their still bodies lie beside the orifice, presently to be joined by yet others. The mother of the boys, clad in a fur-edged yellow jumper and a mauve-lined skirt, looks interestedly on.

“ The Cornish Floral Dance ” (Plate 21) on the other hand is slightly “ impressionistic.” While it is certainly a faithful pictorial record of a quaint, amusing custom, it is at the same time treated in a whimsical, dainty, impressionistic, though always definitely decorative manner. The little village visible on the hill, the placid harbour with its solid breakwater, tipped by a lighthouse whose winking light flashes out through the hazy evening twilight, its homely fishing boats dotted about the surface of the water ; the distant landscape thrown back by three slender, bushy-topped trees ; and in the foreground the moving figures of the merry procession of the floral dance.

A curious, corduroy-vested villager bangs the drum ; another, a mere pudgy, check-capped boy, distends his cheeks in an obviously successful effort to add the reedy resonance of a big brass instrument to the sum of the musical programme. Young men and girls, visitors and natives, dance a joyful peregrination to their tune, wandering onwards up the hillside. Altogether a happy, charming, exuberant picture.



There are many other “ oils ” more than worthy of record, but these I have attempted to describe will suffice to give the reader an impression of the wide variety and consistent effective quality of Gerald Moira’s work. Still more numerous are his water-colours, and the Professor handles water-colour with the same sure skill. Two examples from his brush are reproduced in these pages, “ The Russian Ballet ” (Plate 14), and “ Pegwell Bay ” (Plate 33).

“ Ferreting.”

“ The Cornish  
Floral Dance.”

Water Colours.





Plate 29.  
STATIONS OF THE CROSS, XII.  
at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.  
1921.





Plate 30.  
STATIONS OF THE CROSS, XIV.  
At St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.  
1921.







THE decorations that have formed the greater part of Moira's work during the last decade fall naturally into two categories : marine and mural.

The marine decorations have consisted of the embellishment of no fewer than seventeen ocean-going liners, those of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, a vast amount of work of which since, alas, no small proportion has been lost beneath the waves.

Marine  
Decorations.

For the main part, these decorations have taken the form of lunettes and panels in the public rooms of the liners. Sometimes it has been a pair of face-to-face lunettes, in other case friezes, panels, roundels in stateroom, smoke room, public saloon or staircase.

Typical lunettes are reproduced in Plates 22, 23 and 24, and smaller panels in Plate 25.

The artistic decoration of public rooms of the P. & O. lines was placed by the Company in the hands of their architects, Messrs. Collcutt & Hamp, and it was directly due to Mr. Collcutt that Professor Moira was chosen for the work. It is safe to say that it could not have been more wisely allocated.

The ship on which the artist lavished more labour than on any other was the SS. "Medina," which received that special distinction in honour of its service in carrying the King, then Prince of Wales, to India. This was early in Moira's career.

Mr. Collcutt called upon him for the embellishment of the royal "Medina's" walls, and for the great royal coat of arms that was painted on her bows. It is a thousand pities that she is no longer afloat to bear witness to the patient and successful endeavours of the artist to render her worthy of her royal passengers.

But she is gone—a casualty in the great war. And all that remains of the charming decorations that garnished her are some of Moira's original colour sketches and a few photographs that are inadequate to convey the rich beauty of these decorations.

Out of the seventeen ships for which and on which Gerald Moira has laboured, six have since sunk or been sunk, and, as in the case of the "Medina," the work is for ever lost.



To turn to mural decorations apart from ships, Moira's work has during the last decade covered many various purposes and places.

The great war was not without its telling effect on the work of Gerald Moira, as indeed of every artist. The five years of the greatest event that has ever scored the hearts of nations could not fail to affect and colour his labours. At least four of his large mural decorations and many smaller pictures have recorded some phase of the great upheaval and one may hope that these may play their part in the lesson to those generations of the future who must for ever beware a repetition of the ghastly international struggle.

War  
Decorations.

The largest of his war works was done for the Canadian National War Memorial—a collection of historical war paintings by the most eminent and able artists of the period.

Moira's contributions to this collection consisted of a triptych, about thirty feet in width by twelve in height, "No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital at Doullens," and a twelve feet by ten feet painting "Canadian Foresters in Windsor Park."

"Canadian  
Lumbermen in  
Windsor Park."

No section of the great British Empire army was more picturesque than the lumbermen from Canada. In 1916 the first battalion of these stalwart sons of the forest came to Virginia Water; when the war reached its victorious close there were twenty thousand Canadians cutting timber in Great Britain and France, and even in Italy, and trimming and shaping it in great mills and creating from it aerodromes and war-works generally. Clad in their blue overalls and khaki shirts with their soft, wide, western hats they became in many places a familiar sight.

Moira was so impressed by that first battalion, as he saw them pursuing their strenuous toil in the beautiful, shady forest of Windsor that he was impelled to put them on to canvas. He began. Shortly afterwards that indefatigable Art Adviser to the Canadian War Memorials Committee, Mr. P. G. Konody, happened to see the work and it was immediately commissioned as one of the decorations for the great collection which had then just begun to materialise.

The picture, or decoration (Plate 26) is an excellent composition and still a perfectly veracious record. The season is the early summer. Looming beneath a brilliant blue sky centred with dazzling white is the historic royal castle, reflecting in its gaunt, grey stone the beauty of the summer day. The royal standard flutters from the keep. The rich foliage of giant trees runs the whole gamut of greens in the expert arrangement of nature, from the massed dark-foliaged column in the foreground to the more distant spreading of younger growths with their touch of arboreal yellow.

A massive tree has just been felled. Its shaggy naked end bears witness to the efficacy of double-handled saw and keen-edged axe wielded by the foresters. Four hearty soldier-lumbermen are grouped about the huge log as they commence to sever it again into practicable and portable length. Another is perched upon a load of these logs that have been wrested from their native forest and are soon to feel the tang of the whirring saw in the lumber mill. On the extreme left, a group brings up a second team for yet another load.

The picture is a document of Empire, a record of loyal labour, an epic of strength, with all of which it unites the qualities of highest art and powerful decoration.

"The Third  
Canadian  
Stationary  
Hospital."

Different in scheme and subject is the other Canadian picture "The Third Stationary Hospital," (Plate 27). When the British trench line formed itself into an impassable barrier to defend which men gave up their limbs and lives, there sprang up in the villages and towns behind them many—far too many—hospitals, where the wounded defenders were cared for and their wounds treated with the utmost skill and kindness. For this sad purpose the most suitable available buildings were commandeered, among them many fine old French chateaux.

One such, at Doullens, behind that part of the line manned by the Canadian Divisions, was converted into and equipped as a stationary hospital. Once it had been one of France's finest mansions.

Here Moira was sent under the direction and protection of the Canadians to obtain the data for his decoration which was to record for the benefit of Canada that particular phase





Plate 31.  
THREE. PANELS.  
In the Chancel at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.  
1915-1916.







Plate 32.  
BLESSING THE GOSPELLER.  
In All Saints', Margaret Street, London.  
1920.





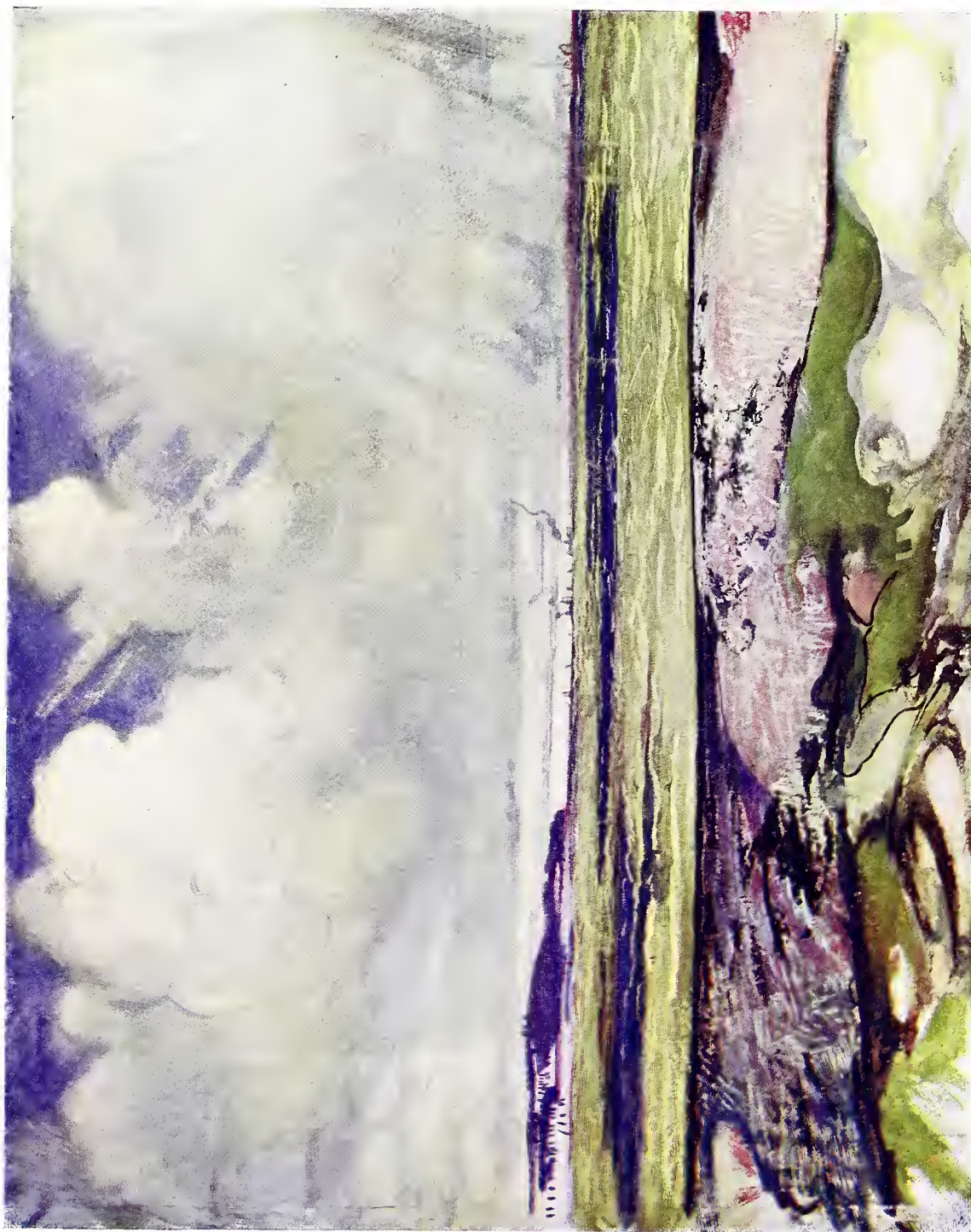


Plate 33.  
PEGWELL BAY.  
Water Colour  
1913.





of the great war in which they took so loyally their share. He remained there for many weeks, becoming imbued with the wonderful spirit of the army and marvelling at the assiduous, gentle, tender, never-ceasing care bestowed by nurses and sisters and doctors amid all the ghastly, naked horrors of war on the smashed humanity that came from the nearby trenches to be patched up and saved from death.

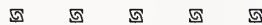
No man could see all this and fail to feel it to the very soul. So Moira's triptych is one of his deepest works. It reveals at once the spirit of tender love, the tragedy and wickedness of war, and the phoenix-like spirit of the wounded that, half recovered from their wounds, wrest joy out of sport while waiting for their return to the horrors of the trenches.

The centre panel depicts the chapel of the chateau converted into a receiving room, into which the wounded are taken to have their field-dressings removed before they are placed in the wards. The fine old building with its half-domed end from which the Virgin and Child look down, and with its massive arches, makes a splendid, dignified background for a typical army-hospital scene. A kind-faced sister occupies the centre of the panel; upon a camp bed and covered by a blanket lies a wounded man, beside whom a white-garbed doctor prepares to attend him. On the left a soldier limps one-legged along upon the arm of a comrade; another man, bare to the waist, is being treated by two doctors in efficient manner.

The left panel epitomises the convalescent stage, when the men have sufficiently recovered to be able to benefit by the open air. A soldier lies in his camp bedstead beneath a white awning that shelters him from the sun. The picturesque town of Doullens is in the centre of the wide landscape. A team of Americans indulge in their national game of baseball below. A uniformed officer wearing on his arm and back the badges of his Brigade talks to the patient, while the gentle nurses attend his wants. The dignified drapery of curtains throws into the distance a curious tree.

The opposite panel shows the evacuation of patients to the Base Hospital. An old gateway of the inner fortifications stands erect in the middle of the picture and the outer wall of the building is painted in sharp perspective on the right. Here and there a tree breaks up the composition. In the foreground, stretcher-bearers carefully carry the patient to the waiting ambulance, while the sister supervises the operation.

Into the whole triptych Moira has contrived to instil a great feeling of sympathy besides creating a splendid decoration. The white and blue and red of the costumes of the nurses and the sisters, the rich colours of the landscapes, and the architectural beauties of the buildings lend themselves beneath his able brush to the making of a triptych well worthy to rank high in the collection of decorations by all the great artists of the day.



Though these were perhaps Moira's most important war paintings, they were not by any means all. War memorials have been many and have taken many forms—not a few have been the painted panels representative of some phase of the war or the connection with it of those whom the memorials were designed to commemorate. The Canadian pictures fall of course within this class, but more definitely the panel painted for Messrs. Gray, Dawes & Company provides a decorative record.

This picture is in a sense a border to a list of names—and yet it is in itself a dramatic pictorial summary of the devastation and the death-dealing curse of war.

In the immediate foreground a group of young men, attired in the various uniforms of air, land and sea, indicate the sources from which the Empire army was drawn. A column of infantry stretches marching down through the rolling landscape and past the hop-fields of Kent to the sea. Down in the hollow of the coast line nestles the port of Dover with Dover Castle standing near, a landmark and a sentinel. Looking out over the Channel, one sees the familiar leave boat with its queer designs of "camouflage," and, just behind, the equally familiar Belgian leave boat. A little further out, escort destroyers await the departure of the men for the French coast, and, backing them up again, destroyers and cruisers of the Fleet on the watch for any indication of the presence of the enemy.

Across the Channel there bursts forth from out the ground a veritable hell of fire and smoke and terror—the destination of the young manhood assembled in lovely Kent to be marshalled for the fight. It is a picture that is a war record in the most literal sense.



But the war has passed, and at its end Moira welcomed no less than others the opportunity to practise his art again on subjects of peace. One of his earliest undertakings after it came to a close was a series of small ecclesiastical decorations, "Stations of the Cross," for a London church, St. Paul's, Knightsbridge. These are not yet finished. There are to be in all fourteen, but so far only eleven of them are in place. (Plates 29 and 30).

Those of them which are finished present a powerful series of incidents from the crucifixion and within the small and somewhat awkward shape of the cross-shaped gilt frames, the artist has succeeded in achieving eleven remarkable examples of unconventional and realistic ecclesiastical painting. He has contrived to interpret the old story in a new way and yet adhere to the general conception of the subject. On the bare, inhospitable walls of the church these "Stations of the Cross" are as gems set in steel.

These, however, are not the only products of Moira's genius in St. Paul's. A series of twelve panels set upon the walls glorify and embellish the Chancel. These are rectangular narrow panels three feet in height bearing each the portrait of a dignitary of the Church. (Plate 31).

Each one of these panels is an erect portrait painted with a wealth of gorgeous colour. These ecclesiastics in their rich robes of office offered Moira an excellent opportunity for the use of his sense of decoration, an opportunity of which he took full advantage, and the flaming reds and golds and purples add life to the somewhat austere blankness of the walls. The portraits are, moreover, powerful and living presentations, and, looking at them, one feels oneself in the presence of the great.

Yet another ecclesiastical work, and perhaps the most important single canvas, is the "Blessing of the Gospels" in All Saints', Margaret Street.

The ceremony of "Blessing the Gospeller" takes place on St. Peter and St. Paul's day every year. Moira's picture of it is about ten feet by eight in size (Plate 32). Beneath the light of candles in gold candelabra and the swirling of the fumes of holy incense, the Rev.

"Stations of  
the Cross,"  
St. Paul's,  
Knightsbridge

Chancel  
Portrait Panels

"Blessing the  
Gospeller."





Plate 34.

MISTRESS DOROTHY HAZARD DEFENDS THE FROME GATE.

From a decoration in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Bristol.

1917.







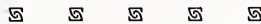
Plate 35.  
 THE ATLANTIC OCEAN.  
 Decoration in the Brazil Centenary Exhibition at Rio de Janeiro.  
 1922.





Geoffrey Held kneels before the Bishop of Nassau. The Bishop, his strong, resolute face set off by his magnificent robes of gold with sleeves of chiffon shot with scarlet, recites the Gospel from the open page of a book held in the hands in the kneeling priest. Clad in robes of wonderful scarlet emblazoned with gold, the Vicar, the Reverend McKay, stands erect, hands clasped in prayer. The Master of Ceremonies, clothed in evening dress, survival of those days when his predecessors attended in full burnished armour, looks on, arms folded. Choristers in scarlet and white are seen at the edge of the picture, and two officials in lace-edged capes hold aloft lighted candles in golden candlesticks, while another carries the incense.

In the background of the picture are vaguely seen other pictures, the pipes of an organ and the gothic tracery of altar arches. Above is inscribed, in Latin, the Gospel of the Day.



Among his later works Moira has contributed a decoration as one of a series of large panels for the Council Chamber in the Council House of Bristol. The panels were each filled with a decoration illustrating some incident in Bristol's history, and Moira, for his picture, chose that extraordinary scene when Mistress Dorothy Hazard, a woman of Cromwellian times, and, moreover, of Cromwellian courage, defended her beloved city against the invading forces of Rupert. (Plate 32).

"Mistress Dorothy Hazard defends the Frome Gate, Bristol."

The story goes that Rupert had been greatly successful in these Western counties and when he marched upon Bristol in 1643 with his victory-satiated troops, his record of unconquerability preceded him and cast such fear into the hearts of the governor and the garrison that, in the hope of securing better terms than would be the portion of a conquered city, they proposed to surrender without a fight.

Not so Mistress Dorothy. Nothing of the fear of the Royalists about her. Raging against the pusillanimous policy of the governor, she decided that if men-at-arms would not do their duty, she, with the aid of the washerwomen of the city, would show them how. So, gathering around her all the womenfolk and such of the soldiers as would react to her dauntless enthusiasm and obey her commands she waited at the Frome gate, prepared to defend it with woolsacks and with blankets and with life.

And such is the marvellous power of great courage that these women, backed up by a handful of soldiery and a piece or two of inadequate artillery, repulsed the invaders and won everlasting glory, putting to shame the weakness of the governor whose valour had been dissipated by the mere echo of Rupert's past successes.

Moira has contrived to put into this picture all the romance and the strangeness of the scene of preparation at the Frome gate. Mistress Dorothy, majestic in her courage and resplendent in black velvet dress and scarlet cape, exhorts her supporters to effort and directs the arrangements for the reception of the Royalists. A seething mob of valiant women rush hither and thither in the frenzy of hasty preparation. Toiling men strain at the rope of a heavy cannon. On the battlemented wall above the gate itself the flag of the city is hoisted as a signal to the approaching army that resistance will be made, and soldiers in armour prepare to give battle.

The citadel-like gateway and its tower, built of solid masonry, loom up repellantly, and through an arch of St. John's Church on the city walls one glimpses the rolling landscape over which the Royalists must come. The quaint squared portcullis adds its decorative effect to the strange scene. The city arms graven on the wall serve as inspiration for the defenders. The cobbled street adds realism and quaintness to the picture.

It is an interesting as well as a beautiful representation, and Moira has well justified his reputation as a decorator in this pictorial reproduction of one of those incidents of splendid courage with which English history abounds.



The Brazil Centenary Exhibition at Rio de Janeiro has provided an opportunity such as Moira delights in. For this great festival he undertook a tremendous triptych and two large panels.

The decorations for one of the large halls at the Exhibition were to consist of a series of paintings allegorically representing the Five Oceans. Three of the five were given to Gerald Moira: the Atlantic, the Arctic and the Antarctic.

The triptych was devoted to the Atlantic Ocean and the two separate panels to the Arctic and the Antarctic Oceans respectively. These splendid examples of the art of Gerald Moira are reproduced in these pages (Plates 35 and 36). The triptych, gay and riotous in colour, curiously combines the gaiety and the seriousness of the peoples that inhabit the shores of the majestic Ocean.

The panels are austere and dignified. The ice-blue cold of the Poles is revealed at the same time as the majesty of their great wastes. The two figures by means of which the artist has personified the Arctic and the Antarctic Oceans, and the towering icebergs, bespeak the wonder and immensity of their rigorous beauty.



I cannot close this summary of Moira's works without reference to a task on which he is just now engaged, a task of singular and unusual interest.

It is a ceiling decoration in miniature. A year or more ago, that indefatigable and brilliant architect, Sir Edwin L. Lutyens, R.A., drew up plans for a presentation doll's house for Her Majesty the Queen. The building was to be unique, a perfect model of a palatial residence about ten feet by eight, the joint work of all the most eminent artists of the time, complete with sculpture, mural decorations, pictures and period furniture, and equipped with all the necessities of so magnificent, if diminutive, a residence, even down to the silver faucets that control the water for the tiny baths.

There was hardly a distinguished Royal Academician who was not to contribute to this curious little model of splendour, nor a famous manufacturer whose name stands for some household thing that is the best of its kind, who was not to donate something of his special manufacture. Her Majesty accepted the gift, and the artists enthusiastically began. Moira is designing, making and decorating the ceiling of the Dining Room, which is forty-two inches in length, and twenty in width. The ceiling is divided into a number of panels, all dominated by a comparatively large oval **centre** panel.





Plate 36.

THE ARCTIC OCEAN.  
Decorative panel in the Brazil Centenary Exhibition at Rio de Janeiro.  
1922.

THE ANTARCTIC OCEAN.  
Decorative panel in the Brazil Centenary Exhibition at Rio de Janeiro.  
1922.





It is delightfully done. In the centre panel, a goddess of Plenty holds sway from the height of the clouds, floating about the building. From a high balcony of the palace, seen rising into the clouds, an orchestra discourses sweet music. About the goddess the four rectangular corner panels are filled with fauns and nymphs who bring to her from the terrestrial sphere the fruits of the earth and the richness thereof. In the four panels that surround the centre oval, allegorical figures represent the four seasons and illustrate the beneficence of Providence.

Small as the whole ceiling is it is an exquisite little piece of work, and, when it is mounted in its place above the diminutive walls and bears the perfect little chandeliers and candelabra that it is destined to support, will be well calculated to charm and attract all who see it, even where all its surroundings compete in charm and attraction.

He is also designing the colour scheme of the walls, and painting the miniature portraits that are to adorn them. Moreover, in order that the whole room shall be in perfect keeping with the ceiling, he will design the over-doors, which are to be in *grisaille* and the luxurious little carpet for the room's floor.

It is a singular testimony to the versatility of his art that at the same time as he is working on this miniature and composite creation, he is also engaged on a decoration sixteen feet in width which is to form a war memorial for the Union Jack Club.

Union Jack Club  
War Memorial.

This latest work is not sufficiently far advanced to allow of description in any detail, but the cartoon and the colour scheme—in so far as the latter is already carried out—indicate that this will be not the least worthy of a place in the list of Gerald Moira's works.



Thus through many different channels of art has Moira added to the works of art of the present day. Coloured plaster, stained glass, mosaic and mural paintings have all come within his scope and been utilised for the embellishment and enrichment of buildings as various in their nature and their destiny as they have been numerous. Thus has this distinguished artist shown how intimate, how much the concern of all classes, is the art of mural decoration, how manifold its purpose, and how infinitely wide its service.

The power of Moira's art is as great and telling, and bears as much the quality of fitness, as did that of the masters of previous generations and centuries. Applied, as it has been, equally to restaurant, to shop, to church, to private residence, it bears living, potent witness to a wonderful field that has hitherto either been ignored by great painters or passed over as unworthy their best efforts.

Moira is one of those artists who has never been content to imitate others. His work bears throughout the traces of his own originality and ability. Surveyed as a whole, it has of course shown in the later years a more experienced technique than in the earlier years, but not at any time since he began his career as a mural decorator has there been any doubt of his rank. With his innate ability coupled to his high purpose in devoting his art also to the common uses of life rather than reserving it, as once it was reserved, for great churches and palaces, he has marked an epoch in the application of Decorative Art. Henceforward, it is not too much to expect that one day the general public will learn to love and admire great paintings because great paintings will surround them in all the places where they are wont to assemble. Certainly, Gerald Moira's ambition and striving—yea, and achievement, to this end, are magnificent.





PART II.  
SOME NOTES AND THOUGHTS  
ON DECORATIVE ART.

*By Gerald Moira.*





RT to-day is suffering from archæology. The criticism one hears, whether of painting, sculpture, architecture or design, is generally prefaced by "it is so beautifully Titianesque" or "it is such pure Gothic," and if the work is modern and does not directly recall the past or cannot be definitely fixed on to this or that it is usually either made the subject of adverse criticism or left well alone.

The comparison between old and new is the easiest form of criticism. The mere culling and "swatting-up" of ancient arts are comparatively easy, but the ability to form an accurate judgment and an unprejudiced opinion upon the few works that are really modern is more difficult of acquisition and requires a sound education in art. This, undoubtedly, is the reason why archæology has been so fashionable.

The way of the old men was certainly better. In architecture they added their style to what existed or pulled down what was in their way. This was far more honest dealing than what happens to-day, when the architect in adding to a Gothic church must make his addition in imitation Gothic, and the mural decorator is called in to do Gothic decoration which generally ends in rows of "kiss-mammy" angels in over-embroidered white nighties standing about on cotton-wool clouds and sucking tin trumpets. What is the good of this to either art or religion?

We have no architecture to-day. When an architect talks of following tradition he means being traditional. On the other hand, when the serious painter talks of tradition he means adding his interpretation of nature to the interpretation of nature of the men of the past.

These widely separated points of view result from the diverse curricula which artists and architects are called upon to pass through, the education each is required to assimilate. Whereas to-day the painter begins his real education in art from nature, the architect begins his with archæology, with studying the orders, with making full size drawings of Greek caps and so on, instead of getting down to the hard facts of plan construction. The result of all this is that when a painter executes a decoration in a modern theme he is usually doomed to disappointment because he finds it out of sympathy with the surrounding architecture, as the building is only an incompatible echo of the past. Giotto was lucky; he was more favoured. When he did his great work at Assisi he was painting in architecture of his time, which explains why that work of his is so eminently satisfactory: it is so completely an enrichment of a building erected by a man who thought in the art language in which they both lived.

But I feel that a change is coming about. It may be that the great war will prove to have been the beginning of a new era and that the economy that has been forced upon us will bring about the birth of a new period in architecture for the very simple reason that it will compel, in many cases, the use of cheaper materials. Concrete and steel will perhaps after all be our salvation and will give the mural decorator his great chance.



It yet remains to be seen whether any of the younger generation of architects will grasp this opportunity fully and so come into line with the painter who has for so long only been marking time.

It is a very difficult question this, the old problem of the difference or disparity in the sister arts ; whether it is not possible, whether it would not be advisable to control this disparity between them by keeping a stronger hand upon the one or the other. This I have always advocated, for I am firmly convinced that it would be quite possible, in a school, to teach and train architects in just the same way as students are trained and taught who desire to devote their attention to portrait painting, illustration, mural decoration and so on. These students are not all put through the same old mill. They are taken separately, and each is given a different curriculum in accordance with the particular branch he wishes to follow ; that is to say, they are dealt with as individuals and not as period students or as so many people in classes with no reference either to the individual or to the individual's hopes.

So really we are tying to the hand of architectural education the weight that is keeping the mural decorator down. Architectural education is too archæological. One hears over and over again that the architect must give his client what he wants. That is all nonsense—nearly all clients are only too anxious to have that which is different from what his neighbour possesses, provided that it contains convenient and economic planning—and really these are the only restrictions placed upon an architect.





MURAL decoration can be divided into three categories: ecclesiastic, civic, and domestic. Early ecclesiastical decoration, which was generally confined to narrow lines and was of necessity governed by dogma, gave far less opportunity for originality, but what was lost in this direction was undoubtedly gained in the intensity of real religious feeling that was displayed by the artist in the subject, because in very early Church decorative painting the artist was not even allowed the choice of his models, and yet it is very curious that throughout this dark time the artist's fervour was practically the only thing

that kept the Church together.

But the whole-hearted sincerity which we so admire in the great Giotto, caused him to fall away from the common usage that had maintained for many centuries, i.e., the use of the artist merely as a means of preserving the dogma of the Church, and he was one of the first to use secular subjects in ecclesiastic decoration. By so doing he brought into this art warmth, the divine possibilities of human life hitherto unknown.

After the long period during which his great influence lasted came the flamboyant decoration of the Renaissance with all its magnificence, but how much more distant, how much less intimate to the soul in sorrow than the simple interpretations of the Bible and Testament of those early Italians. It is difficult to say much about mural decoration after these two periods, for it dwindled away to the feeble representation of individuals and became just so much ornament.

But whatever is done in ecclesiastical decoration, it must have education for its fundamental base, and I am quite certain that nothing can save this form of art but the introduction into it of modern people and modern costume. It is the only way to bring the Church teaching within reach of the people. In the early Italian and mediæval periods of art it was the close intimacy between the Church and the masses that made the Church so strong, and who but the artists cemented this relationship? And the artists should again show the way.

Civic art to-day has a far wider scope than that which it covered during the hey-day of Italian art. Then, it generally meant the decoration of the Council-Chamber and closely connected offices, but to-day civic art covers much more ground and I think we can safely include the factory and its recreative rooms as well as the school, the public bath, the eating house, the shop, the exhibition building (temporary or permanent), the hotel, the great ship, (and why not, in the near future, the flying ship?) and ever so many more buildings and utilities.

It is this civic decorative art or public decoration that opens such a wide vista of possibilities for the mural decorator of to-day. All these opportunities are at our door, but the artist has yet to show the public that he is willing to treat much of the work only as temporary decoration—because it is that feeling that once done it cannot be got rid of that, I feel sure, deters the public from undertaking such decoration, and therefore prevents a lot of good work ever seeing the light of day.

What is he to do? I say that, first of all, he must come off that ridiculous pedestal on which he stands, and, to begin with, measure his work by the linear foot and estimate for it by the foot fixed. He must be a business man for once; after all, he is doing the work for a living, and the shopkeeper keeps a shop for the same purpose. The shopkeeper will quote you the price of his goods by their quantity—why should not the artist? And we very well know that in days passed by artists worked thus—and some very good artists there were among them, too. Did not Rubens haggle with the King of England over the price of the ceiling at Whitehall, and then, after having cut it pretty fine, decline to deliver the work until he had received the money?

Very little encouragement or advancement to art has ever come from bodies or corporations; most encouragement has been through the individual patron in the past—and I believe that the individual patron of to-day is and will be the person to look to for encouragement to decorative art, rather than the County or City Council. In this term “individual patron” I include the proprietors or companies carrying on the shop, the factory, the steamship, the eating house, etc., etc. The principal reason is that such patrons know what they want, and they want it more or less directly to attract their clients or customers. I think that this is a very strong inducement to the artist to take an interest in this kind of work, besides which, all this class of decoration can be, and should be, symbolical of our own time.

For public civic decoration there is little encouragement to-day; lack of funds is generally the excuse when the interior of the building comes to be completed. I always feel that too much is lavished in sculptural figures and ornament placed too high up on these buildings in cities to allow their being seen to advantage in the narrow streets. I contend that much of the money usually expended in this manner should be used for interior decoration—if this would be the means of permitting the interior to be finished.

One never hears of the architect having trouble with the City Council over the sculpture account, but let him mention interior mural decoration and his Council is “on him like a pack of wolves.” But it will come; it only wants some enterprising City Council to insist upon having all the enrichment inside these new buildings—and in paint, not stone—instead of outside, and the lot will follow suit so as to be in the fashion.

Still, with all these hopes, there is a far greater limitation of subject, and not only of subject, but also of artistic possibilities, than there is in the other class of civic decoration I have just dealt with; the connection with direct production in the one case, and the difficulty of ever hoping to convey the various functions of a City Council in the other, are very wide and are against the City Council, and it is only with allegory as subject that this kind of decoration can satisfactorily be treated. At the same time, the longer one’s experience, the more one comes to the conclusion that allegory is the least satisfactory theme as a basis for large mural work. It dates quickly, thereby becoming old-fashioned sooner than a simple everyday subject, and once the spirit of the times that inspired it has passed, it can naturally never return, whereas with the subject of our own time the out-of-fashion period is very short. How very valuable is the work of Hogarth, Wilkie, Frith, for instance, as real



historians, and how stale and lacking in real interest is that of Thornhill and many others who devoted their art to allegory. Although Frith never attempted mural decoration, his work had the making of sound decorative composition.

The opportunities afforded by the vast modern stores, offices, and the like, give great scope to the decorator who, in an honest and straightforward way, will represent the times and the life in which we live as he sees them and feels them, and without any taint of reminiscence, which, by the way, is one of the cardinal sins of the art of to-day.

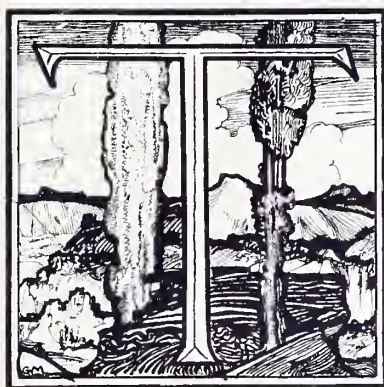
As for domestic mural decoration—is there any domestic decoration now? Has there been any domestic decoration in the last few centuries? None to speak of, since Elizabethan and Stuart times. Perhaps a few large mansions lavishly decorated, but no great wave of fashion for the decoration of the middle-class merchant's, farmer's or small country gentleman's house as there was in the 16th and 17th centuries, a period which is certainly one of the most interesting pages of English mural decoration that we have. The wealth of the decoration of this time is constantly being unfolded as the Queen Anne or Georgian panelling is stripped from Elizabethan rooms in such small manor houses as abound in, say, Gloucestershire and Dorset, shewing always that delightful intimate relation between the owner and his home which is of such great value to-day, not only from the historian's point of view, but which goes to prove that these good people were not ashamed of their lives, their trade, or their profession, and were quite pleased to have the artist represent them on their walls pursuing that trade or profession. This history of their everyday lives was generally depicted in panels with painted mouldings surrounded by floral decoration much enriched by armorial emblems. What honest pride in that everyday life, and what delightful simplicity in the depicting of it by those artists, tramping from house to house; and how little they knew what valuable pages of England's history they were writing.

What brought this school of mural decoration to an end? Little or nothing was done during or after the reign of Queen Anne. Was it the architecture that came to England at that time? Or was it some subtle change in the mode of life of the people? A certain artificiality began to creep into the mode of life about this time, which continued throughout the Georgian period, and the architecture became definitely formal in its set panelling. These things may have had their effect, but what had more to do with the breaking of this fine tradition was "the picture." The picture became more easy to procure, more fashionable, and, of course, more portable. It was this portability and the fact that the people at this time began to travel, that made the home far less the centre of life, and therefore less interesting.

Is there any hope, any possibility, of revising this domestic decoration? If there is, of course it cannot be on those lines, for the man of to-day does not want his everyday life depicted on the walls of his room; and the ordinary man is not sufficiently interested in or proud of his business and, moreover, he is afraid of his friends' opinion. And yet I know a man in the north of England who has two large paintings depicting his factory in his grandfather's time, and he delights to compare the factory of the pictures with the actual factory as it is to-day. Here, again, we only want the brave patron who is willing to start the ball.

Still, there is a wider scope for domestic decoration than merely this intimate one, and one cannot help feeling how much the man who is compelled to live in some dreary manufacturing town misses by not decorating his rooms from floor to ceiling with gay landscape or something of that sort, and the scope and pleasure this would give to the artist on the one hand and to the patron on the other. And this notwithstanding the fact that such a man is often willing to pay very large sums of money to cover the walls of his drawing-room with some silk damask, which won't last so long nor be so satisfactory as good paintings—and the cost would be nearly the same. In this class of decoration I think the patron is waiting for a lead to be given him, the artist waiting for the opportunity: the onus therefore rests with the architect; it is for him to give way, and, in considering the interior enrichment, to give more consideration to colour and less to architectural mouldings, as it is far away more satisfactory to trust to colour scheme than to embark on that very difficult problem of trying to carry a harmony over a number of mouldings and intervening spaces.

I have, in a very limited space, tried to divide mural decoration into its three principal spheres—ecclesiastic, civic, and domestic. Civic, I hope, I have proved to be at the present time in a most hopeful and healthy condition, because of its wide scope, its direct interest to the community and its great and comprehensive possibilities to the resourceful and imaginative artist—qualities which are most essential to the well-being of this young and healthy reborn child of art, who with these attributes should go far and prosper. For the other two, ecclesiastic and domestic, one cannot hold out quite such great hopes, but, taking one with the other, I suppose the Church decoration has, at all events, the one saving grace, *i.e.*, that its subject is staple, founded on education as it is, and whether treated as I suggested, or on worn traditional lines, it has a firm foundation as a jumping-off point, and will only require courage. But what courage on the part of the clergy, the artist and the layman to break through this stupid convention that the poor thing is suffering from to-day. Whereas domestic decoration is in a far worse plight; its complaint is difficult—nay, almost impossible—to diagnose: it is so much in the air. Therefore to make this form of decoration strong enough to take its proper place, the prominent place to which it is in all reason entitled, it requires the utmost collaboration between the architect and the painter, and only by this close sympathetic unity can any hope for its future be made possible. But so long as the architect is content to leave such matters in the hands of tradesmen, so long shall we have the same dreary and hopeless prospects for this most interesting and widely possible form of decorative art. I have never quite understood why an architect should not show the same lavish interest and initiative in the interior decoration of the house as is generally bestowed on its exterior decoration and enrichment. People do not live outside their houses, and it cannot be that the architect thinks that the outside is seen more than the inside; that would be ridiculous—and yet it seems to be the accepted rule so often to finish the exterior to the last chip and leave the interior to look after itself!



HERE is a vast difference between the easel painter, as he is called, or the painter who paints within a frame, and the decorator. The first has no restrictions put upon him. He is free as to scale, free as to colour, free in the choice of the mouldings around the work, and utterly ignorant as to its ultimate resting place and surroundings.

This all tends not only to a looseness of scale, in its broader sense, *i.e.*, with regard to accurate arrangement, and distribution of weight of colour value as distinct from tone distribution, but also, I feel, leads to the rather aimless attitude towards subject which is so deplorable in modern work. In fact, the easel painter knows no laws.

If we stop to think what are the conditions of the decorator, I think we find the obvious ones, scale of figure, preservation of wall surface as a flat plane, and weight of darks; and those that, being technical, are not so obvious, but are, if anything, even more important. First among these comes arrangement of tonality, *i.e.*, one must have an arrangement of nicely distributed darks upon a field of half tone with a pattern of small lights passing right through the composition, or alternatively a light field with the half-tones nicely distributed, and in this case the pattern in the darks. But there is one thing one cannot have, and that is the half-tone and the light or the half-tone and the dark taking up the same amount of surface on the field, because in this case the result would of necessity be a tone distribution monotonous and lacking in vitality.

Then there is the question of colour value. This is even more difficult and complicated than the study of tonality, because here one has counterchange plus balance, tone and harmony. What I call counterchange, for want of a better word, is balance in change of colour; and balance is practically the same in all colour tone. Of course, in tone value and harmony, possession of the necessary appreciation of colour to harmonise inside the decoration, as well as with its surroundings, is essential.

Counter change, I am pretty certain, can be measured up very much in the same way as the Greeks measured their work from the human figure downwards throughout their architecture to their vases and even to their common utensils. For example, if one has a piece of red on the left-hand side of the composition, it is compulsory to have the complementary on the other side of equal displacement, but the red on the other side should never be more than half the displacement of that on the left, and the complementary to the red on the left-hand side of the composition should be equal to the red on the right, and this must go on throughout the palette.

With regard to balance, let us, for argument's sake, take the reds again. If the red is of one value on the left side, the piece that balances it on the right must of necessity be either darker or lighter, and it is only as they diminish in size throughout the composition that their weight of colour can be repeated.



All this scientific side of composition must be definitely settled, and the value and subtlety of the various colours as they run through the composition definitely fixed before any attention is really given to subject, because it is only by this method of approaching the work that one eliminates that dreadful curse to mural decoration "the individual figure" or "the group of figures." When these values of weight of colour are joined together with carefully considered horizontals and verticals, then can you consider your figures as individuals. But do not think that subject is altogether ignored, because in composing weights, due consideration must be given to the shapes these colours take in their bearing on the subject. Therefore, if one is depicting a tragedy, colour shapes should have direct influence on your subject. One could not in this case have the red, for instance, round and easy in form, and the colours that have a more tranquil effect upon the mind contained in shapes that are jagged or tragic. The composition should tell the story or subject at a distance from which it is impossible to distinguish figures or any detail. In another part I make reference to scale of sketch. I think the reader will realise what I set out to prove when considering the above remarks, because it is obvious that a sketch over a certain size would necessitate too much detail to give true effect to the other more important factors.

I have tried to show that mural decoration should be a carefully considered distribution of weight of tone value and colour distribution, with a very strong regard for the wall surface, a thorough knowledge of scale both within the wall surface to be decorated and also in relation to surrounding architectural features. Subject comes last.

Nearly all artists consider that decoration is merely the enlarging of easel pictures. Even those who talk in the big manner about decorative qualities really in their hearts think this way. I suppose this is only natural: most artists are intolerant, especially when it comes to accepting, or even understanding, that which, because of a lack of appreciation of the difficulties of the problem, does not exactly fit in with their outlook.

This applies more particularly to the easel painter in his attitude to the mural decorator. Even the men who consider themselves decorative picture painters do not really appreciate the problem set, *i.e.*, the real decoration—and after a short conversation one finds that they do not understand balance of composition, the necessity of simplicity of action in figures, or groups of figures, and flatness of treatment. Their habit of painting what they like, how they like, without having to bother their heads as to the surroundings and place their work is to go into, naturally does not fit them for decorators.

Do not think that I am in any way running down the easel painter. I am only trying to prove that a painter of easel pictures is not necessarily a decorator—usually far from it—and to show that the study of mural decoration is a far more complex study than most think. Students who intend to take up this form of art as their profession must study it right through from the beginning, otherwise we shall continue to have thrust upon us ridiculous things, like the Royal Exchange paintings, and those that fill public buildings in Paris and many cities of Europe and America. Ridiculous, I say advisedly—you cannot call them anything else.



RT Education, that vexed question which has raised and always will raise the most bitter argument, is far too great a problem for discussion here. Therefore I intend only to deal with it in so far as it directly affects mural decoration and the mural decorator, the reason why the mural decorator should undergo a different course from the picture painter, and the curriculum such a decoration course should embrace.

Architecture is a most necessary study, but should be looked at from not quite the same standpoint as in the case of training a student to become an architect, but rather from the side of a thorough knowledge of scale and plan-reading.

Scale naturally includes for the decorator proportion and weight, both of colour and tone. This study, if taken by the student separately, must lead to confusion and generally ends in understanding scale purely as architectural dimensions and in the footrule. But if this architectural education, or course, is taken with the rest of the course for mural decoration, no confusion is possible, because the student will very shortly realise that he is not studying architecture as architecture, but as a means which will enable him more easily to realise decoration in its setting and also to gain a knowledge and understanding of the architect's aim and the atmosphere he has wished to convey. This is certainly a most important point, and it is only by a proper course of architectural study that a true realisation and understanding of the architect's motive that mural decoration can possibly be an enrichment of, and a gain to his general scheme. Otherwise it is merely so much painting applied with no relation or sympathy to its surroundings. It is no easy matter and takes much patience, perseverance and time for students to grasp thoroughly that their work in this branch of art has always to subordinate itself to the will of the master hand, *i.e.*, the designer of the building. And it is not sufficient excuse to make a fine work of art as a decoration, if that fine work of art is out of sympathy with the building.

Plan reading is more difficult and much more tedious, and consequently it is much harder to get students to take intelligent and sufficient interest in it. It is a dry job and students always display a tendency to regard the subject as a side-show. As a result, one generally finds that insufficient attention is given to it, but when a student is brought to understand that the decorator should be able to realise by the section the amount of shadow and therefore weight of colour a certain moulding is going to hold; that it is essential for him to possess the ability to look at the building in perspective, and many other points equally important, the thing is plain sailing, because unless these habits are acquired in studentship days it becomes very hard work to acquire them afterwards and their lack is always apt to hamper an artist's sense of realisation and proportion. This architectural work should be run in conjunction with life drawing and painting as well as study of composition. But all life painting and drawing must be set up on the canvas or paper with a due regard to the proportion of the canvas or paper, and placed on it as a decorative composition, as it is only by this constant use of composition and its bearing on every detail of other branches of study that a thorough appreciation of this

vast and difficult problem can be appreciated. For a decorator's education, the more detail that he puts into his life drawing, the better. The reason for this I will give later. With life painting it is different, because it has a closer relation to the finished mural work, and therefore should have and must have a closer bearing on it ; life painting as a study of broad effect and simple decorative masses, is a far more useful part of a decorator's education than the study the usual art school life student is called upon to assimilate. It must never be forgotten, of course, that the figure should be beautifully placed on the canvas, and also that the study should be put up as a decorative composition. With the model so arranged, the decorative effect can be easily put back after each rest. Much time should be spent by students in arranging models, as it is of great educational value to acquire a thorough knowledge of how to make the most use of the material at one's disposal. It is this ability to handle and the habit of handling all studio properties that must be acquired from the very earliest ; in fact the sooner a student begins to work upon the school studies as though he were in his own studio, and not in a class room, the sooner he will be fitted to take his proper place in the world of art. I am most emphatic on this, as when I look back on my student days and realise that we were never even allowed to see the model put up, had no conception of the difficulties of arrangement or studio management, and that we were sent out into the world with only a certain knowledge of painting technique, I shudder to contemplate the utter criminal folly of such an education.

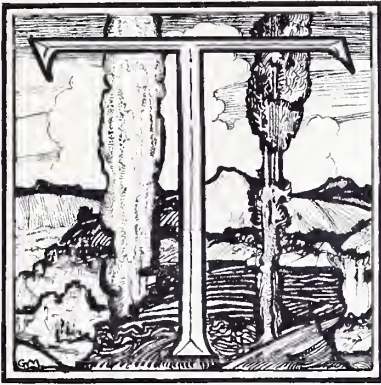
I think we can safely go straight on now to figure, and its bearing upon that part of art education I have already dealt with.

I always think it is better for all elementary students to carry out their first figure compositions in a monochrome, as dealing with too many problems at once is confusing, and the monochrome is better in chalk and charcoal on either a toned paper or brown paper. In this way, starting with a toned surface, it is comparatively easy to procure a good arrangement of darks with a carefully spotted placing of small lights upon it. When this is thoroughly mastered, the light should be made to occupy the greater proportion upon the field of half-tones, and the darker dotted through, and the same applies to the white field and dark field. These problems being thoroughly understood, translate some of them into colour, but only as impressions or blots, and not as detail of any sort, because this detail comes when the composition is taken a stage further—the small cartoon stage. These early sketches for composition, I should have said, must have some definite aim and can very well be ideas for some of the spaces in the student's architectural designs, thus making the work of practical interest.

Taking up the composition in its usual stage by small cartoon drawn in panel, one sees that it is in this stage that attention can be paid to subject in its relation to individual figures or groups of figures, as in earlier stages the connection subject has with composition is its bearing on the shapes of masses of tone value—and in the later stages of development of a composition subject enters yet more intimately into all the details.

But let us get back to the evolution of the mural decoration ; we have now passed what may be termed the three initial stages—the first impression, the colour blot, the small cartoon. Then we come to the colour sketch to scale.





THE colour sketch for a mural decoration should never be more than an inch and a half scale and ought not to be more than an impression of what one wants the work to be, the broad masses of composition of colour value, tone and rhythm of line. It is this first impression that is so immensely valuable and is a thing that in carrying out the large work you will refer to again and again. Now, if the sketch is big, say six or even three inches to the foot, it becomes a decoration in itself, and therefore requires elaboration of detail and such elaboration of detail will become too small when the decoration is enlarged.

Moreover, disregarding these important considerations ; in so large scale a sketch, one is doing the work twice over and will arrive at the full size work stale. I think this is sound advice ; inch and a half scale is easy to work to, as the sketches never become too big to treat as impressions. I had the honour, years ago—about 1900 I think it was—of being taken to the studio of Pavis de Chavanne to show him some sketches, and the first thing that great artist asked was “ What is the scale ? ” and I was interested to find that all his first impressions were to a scale practically the same as that in which I was working, and his reasons for making them to that scale were the same as I have given.

The next step is the cartoon, and the studies for the cartoon. At this stage, detail really comes by its own, as it is in the cartoon that one must put everything that is to go into the finished work. If finally you find you have more than you want, it is easy enough to dispense with whatever is superfluous ; therefore it stands to reason that it is better to have too much rather than an insufficiency, and the same applies to life studies ; this not only for this particular reason, but also because of the fact that these life drawings and drapery studies may be put away for a considerable time between making them and using them, and unless they are full of detail, your memory will not be sufficiently refreshed by them when it comes to their transference.

I really think that white paper is best for cartooning. I did not always think so, I will readily admit. Indeed, I did a lot of work on brown, with red, white and black chalk, but this is a long task and I am not sure that it is so satisfactory as white. White paper should be used, and the subject drawn upon it with charcoal, and no trouble should be saved to make this cartoon as perfect as is humanly possible, for it is here that all experiments can be made ; it is here that all wild suggestions for improvement can be tried ; and in fact it is here that the enthusiast can indulge himself to his heart's delight.

But woe be it to him who plays pranks and attempts big alterations on the finished decoration. Even if it is on canvas it is no easy matter ; of course if the work is on a hard distemper ground like “ Deresco ” it can be scraped, but this is a laborious task—otherwise you have to remove the whole thing, which won't do the canvas any good.

Well, as I have drifted into the finished work I had better go right on, though there is not much to say about it. All the work that counts has now been done ; the rest is only a little better than manual labour. Still, it is hard work, paint pushing on a large scale, especially

if you are using stiff wax on a rough ground. There is one point that I wish to lay emphasis upon, viz., the necessity of having sufficient colour mixed to cover the space, as it makes so much difference in keeping the surface of the wall. Be very careful that your cartoon is accurately traced on the canvas after it has been squared up and the canvas squared, as by this means you are certain to get every detail in its proper place ; in fact, every mechanical device that can be used, should be used, to keep the drawing right—even a net with its mesh of the same size as that on the cartoon, may be a help—because all decorators must remember that the nearer they get to doing their finished work in one painting, the better it will be as decoration and the more chance they will have of preserving the wall surface. This especially applies to working on canvas away from the wall.

In designing figure compositions it is very often useful to model the figures and group them together as they are wanted, drawing from this little crowd of people. The group can be lighted with a candle or electric light—though it will be necessary to flatten down the light and shade, otherwise this will be too strong when the drawings are used on the inch and half scale colour sketch. These little figures do not require to be more than about three inches and of course do not require a very deep knowledge of modelling to make. Some artists cut figures out in paper and place them on their composition, but I do not think this gives quite as satisfactory a result as the little dolls. Drapery can be put on them by rolling out wax with a rolling pin until it becomes quite thin enough to fall into folds, or with bits of thin stuff dipped into clay water which will become stiff and hard in quite a short time, thus enabling one to erect flying drapery of a most realistic kind.

Cutting the figures out in cardboard and placing them upon the stage in the position required is a favourite way with some artists, but to do this properly one must be certain of the pose of the figures and design of drapery before they are actually cut out ; there is a slight vagueness that comes from the clay or wax dolls can be of great service as suggestion. In reality all the devices are good so long as they serve their purpose. They are all as old as the hills. Veronez used the wax dolls, and some of his little stages are still in existence—I remember seeing one of them with a part burned where the candle had fallen down. To-day, with electric light to help, what fun one can have—little bits of coloured glass and one has a colour scheme ready made. I have done this often with really good results.

These model stages can be put to two very good uses. They can be used as models either for the drawing of light and shade, or for the drawing of line composition. I think really they are more useful as models for light and shade because, if too much reliance is placed upon them for line composition, one really comes to rely upon them for the composition, which is wrong, as your composition should be the outcome of your mind's interpretation ; and all devices from life drawing down to media-making or anything else are only, and can only be a means to assist the artist to express himself. Therefore let me warn the student to avoid the danger of using these little stages instead of his mind.





IN the limited space I have touched upon figure composition only lightly. I am afraid I must give only a short space to students and art teaching.

There are not many Art teachers ; but there are a good many very good drawing masters. It is quite a common species. I believe that most people can be taught to draw, but to teach good taste or to teach a student to be an artist is not so easy. Good taste has not so many difficulties because there are a few well-known processes or formulas through which the student can be put. The one most common in early days—

that of making it difficult for the student to see too much of that which was good, so as to make him more appreciative of the good—may have been all right, but could one command so much obedience from young students to-day ? A theory like this would be all right in an art school on a desert island.

Thoroughly impress a student with the sense of scale and one has gone a long way towards laying the foundation stone of good taste in that young mind. It is scale, scale, always scale. He cannot understand this by going to Technical Institutions—which is what all our Art Schools throughout the country are to-day ; he can only learn it by Art education—by the education of the mind in Art. Every mind has stored away in it somewhere a sense of refinement, and the surest way to stifle that refinement is to stuff it full of technique. By doing that there is created merely an easy method of production, which takes the place of creation.

A certain amount of technical education carried on during the Art education of a student is essential : drawing from life, painting from life with studies of figure composition, and in after years drawing and painting from the antique and still-life painting. This last study should not be taken in hand until much painting and drawing from life has been done. Still-life painting is most dangerously apt to stagnate the mind as it creates an academic stiffness that is most difficult to eradicate.

All studies, no matter what they are, must be carefully placed on the paper or canvas, as it is just as essential to have a life study well placed as any figure in a composition ; besides which, care in this matter teaches and encourages the habit of good proportion and distribution of spaces.

I have always insisted on students carrying out their own ideas, giving of course an architectural problem, i.e., a frieze for a lecture-theatre. In this way, one complies with conditions as they are found in professional life, because it is usual for an architect to come to the artist with a space to decorate in the lecture-theatre of his building, expecting the artist, and rightly too, to give him a suitable subject as well as a suitable decoration for such a place. Therefore it is a great mistake to give students their subject as well as the space to be dealt with, because it deprives them of making use of their power of selection, and tends to render them hopelessly at sea when they go out in the world and have to stand on their own feet. It is the old business of spoon feeding which has been unfortunately in existence for generations and



which leads to that helpless feeling of not knowing what to do with which too many young people are familiar who have not been allowed any voice in selection during their studentship.

And this brings us to a point where I know I will be heartily disagreed with by many, by, I should say, nearly all teachers in Art Schools. I consider that students should have control of the school in so far as selection goes, selection of models, posing the models, selection of composition, and what is more important, selection of subject. It is quite ridiculous that the head of a school should place himself on a pedestal before students posing to them as a little tin god, selecting everything for them and strutting about in that tinpot way. I can imagine no method more likely to destroy any confidence they may have in themselves or to kill all desire to produce. The more students are left to themselves, up to a point, the better for them. The art teacher has more chance of finding out what they can do and what they want to do.





THE old saying "Art is a hard mistress," is very true. I think decorative art is a far harder mistress than what is generally accepted as art, but with all the hard knocks and setbacks, all the bitter disappointments experienced, who have set out upon this road of life who would wish to retrace their steps? Very few.

The creation of a School of English Decorative Art that will rank with such acknowledged English Schools as landscape and portraiture is an accomplished fact, and I feel that the Mural and Decorative School of the Royal College of Art, over which I have presided for the last twenty years, has had no small part in that creation.

This building up is a slow process and those who are impatient and those who have no real understanding or sympathy with the movement, refuse to see, or do not see the slow evolution. Nevertheless the demand is in the air, and though one sees much that is called decoration, which has no claim to that distinction because it is tainted with easel picture faults, this is no reason to condemn real decoration and those few enthusiasts who understand it. Unfortunately, there is always this confusion of the public mind with regard to decorative art, caused by the loud talking of those who feel they will never be in the movement by their brush so endeavour to get there by tub thumping; but after all, is not every good movement open to this danger of being pitched into a state of chaos through the fear of the few who do not understand it?

The critic, the educationalist, the lover of art and the art tradesman all gabble on about the slow development of Italian Schools, and eternally wonder why there is not such a system in England to-day. There is, there would be if all these people and those in authority over Art education would give Art education a chance of development, if they would cease interfering with it and continually throwing it into the melting pot. They are exactly like so many children who continually dig up the seeds in their gardens to see if they are growing. It is all so stupid and wasteful, not only in money, but in what is more serious, effort and energy. Who was it who said: "The young mind counts energy before wealth"? And how true it is. Who of us ever count the cost if the effort we are putting forth in our enthusiasm to produce justifies the energy?

This waste depresses the young mind in art and has much to do with sapping the energy and vitality of Art teaching. No effort is justifiable if that effort is to be questioned after a short experience. Many of the Italian Schools lasted several generations, and the handing down of that tradition was ever so carefully considered so as to avoid any break. The result of this certainly was that although the hand gained an excellency of draftsmanship, the hand was never allowed to dominate the mind. Smart drawing and excellent brush handling are only the ABC of art, but to be used properly must have something to express; therefore the education of the mind is really more essential than that of the hand. Art has always been swayed by these two great questions, domination of the mind and the teaching of efficiency. The motto of the former: "It does not so much matter how you say it so long as you have

something to say." And of the latter : " It does not so much matter what you say so long as you say it well."

At the present moment, technique has the best of it, but it is only because one or two younger people have learned to draw and have nothing to say, and the dilettante from the Foreign Office collects their drawings in Bond Street at great expense. But it is only a passing phase ; the mind will dominate in the end.

I feel there is ever so much I would have liked to have said, but find it so difficult to express myself, so I trust that in reading these few pages—that is if you do read them—that you will be patient with me, forgive the bad style, the bad grammar, in fact the bad everything, and remember that it is a few words on decorative painting by a professional decorator but by a very amateurish writer.











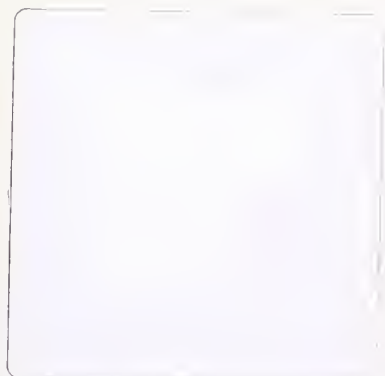












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